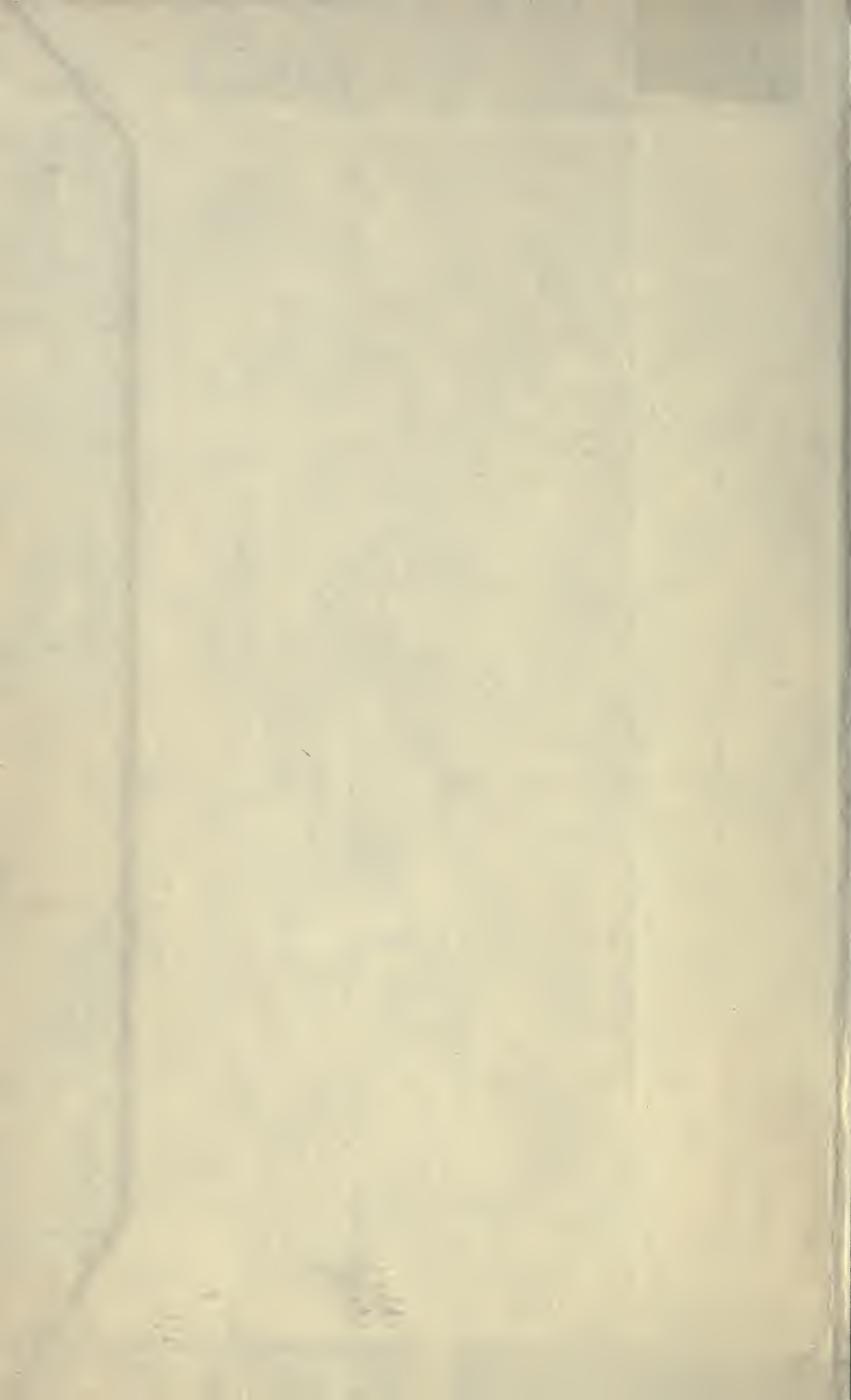




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GUSTAVE FLAUBERT







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GUSTAVE FLAUBERT

AS SEEN IN HIS WORKS  
AND CORRESPONDENCE

BY

JOHN CHARLES TARVER

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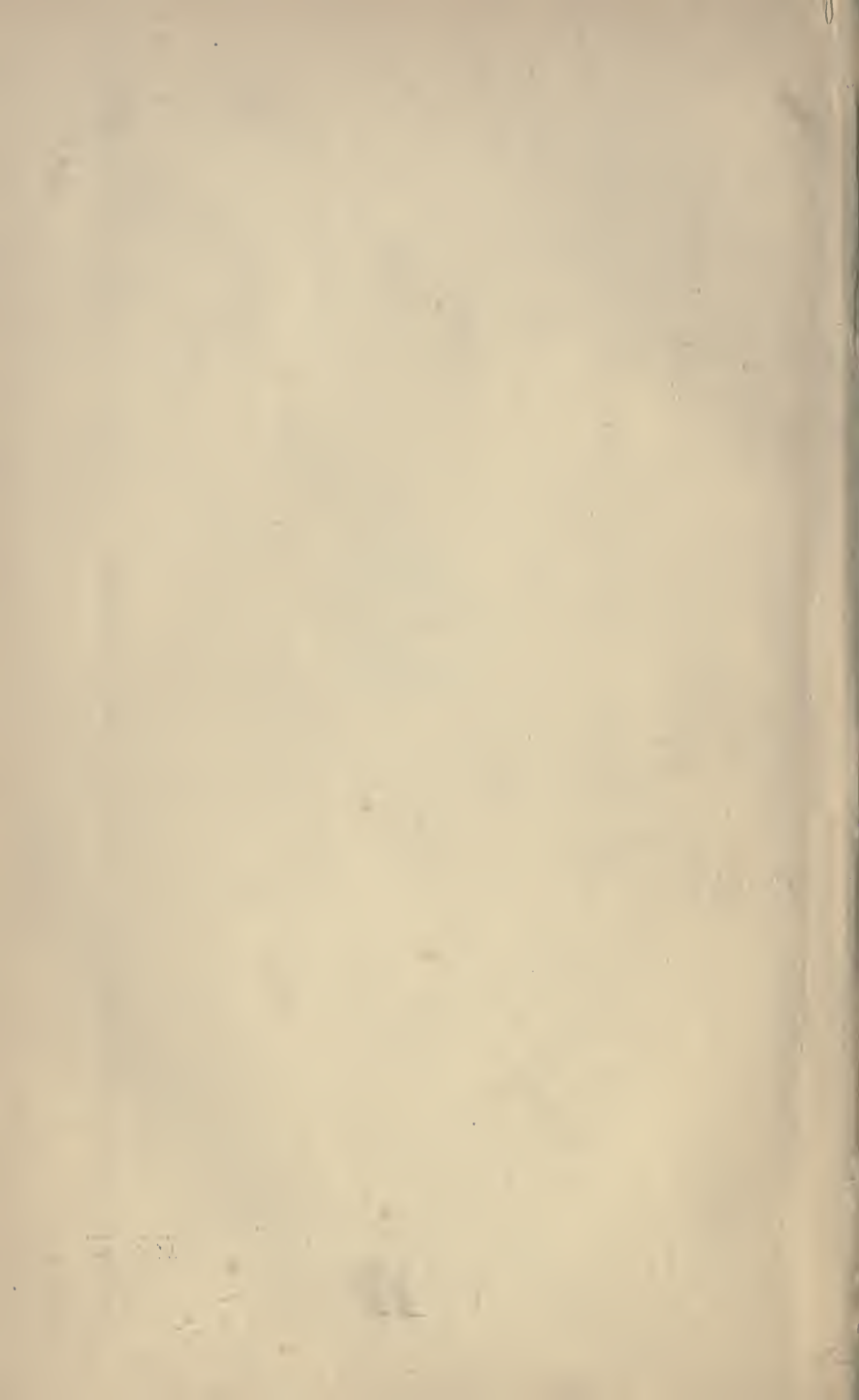
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DEDICATED  
TO THE MEMORY OF  
T. H. M. S.





## PREFACE

MY aim in the following pages has been to place the personality of Gustave Flaubert vividly before my readers. It was through his letters, rather than through his works, that I became interested in him, and my original intention was to make a volume of translations of selected letters; so that others might be impressed in the same way as myself. I found, however, that without continual references to his works, not all of which are translated into English, his letters would be unintelligible, and so gradually the book assumed its present form.

I have done my best to avoid mere gossip about his private life, holding with him that an artist's privacy should be respected; and esteeming this to be, above all, a sound maxim, when so many personal acquaintances are still alive, as in the present case. Thus I did not look for facts which have not already appeared in print. My chief authorities are the author's own works and letters; but I have made use of the introduction written by Madame Commanville to the first volume of her uncle's letters; also of the critical and personal notice written by Guy de Maupassant, and printed with the volume of letters addressed to George Sand. I am indebted to Madame Commanville for permission to make use of these documents. She has been

kind enough to read through the ms., and in every way to help me. I have to thank her also for the illustrations.

In one case I have had to break my rule of making Flaubert write his own story. I have made use of the *Souvenirs Littéraires* of Maxime Ducamp; in citing him I have, except by inadvertence, used inverted commas. He is not considered an unimpeachable authority by the family of Flaubert.

Again, in the case of what with any other man would have been most private and most sacred—his love-letters. They seemed to me more illustrative of Flaubert's devotion to literature than any other of his letters; to omit them would have been to omit what is most striking in his correspondence; and as both they and Maxime Ducamp's account of the lady to whom they were written had already been published, it seemed to me that I ran no risk of being charged with indiscretion in translating them, and citing Maxime Ducamp, whose book had not been translated when I wrote.

I append a list of the works of Flaubert. The volume entitled *Par les champs et par les grèves*, as also *Bouvard et Pécuchet*, were published after the author's death; and any defects in them may be attributed to the want of his revision.

In translating I have found a special difficulty with the words 'bourgeois' and 'bête.' They are much in Flaubert's mouth; the former was to him in literature, art, and morality what a 'snob' was to Thackeray; the latter is something different from our 'stupid': 'bêtise' is often noisy, pushing, self-confident, superfluously energetic: as a rule, I have

found 'inane' and 'inanity' come nearest to the idea intended to be conveyed; but I despair of having always reproduced Flaubert's indignation.

I am afraid numerous Gallicisms still remain in spite of careful elimination, especially in the order of the words. I crave the indulgence of readers for these and other defects; by becoming habituated to another language a translator ceases to be duly sensitive to the smaller points in which it differs from his own.

In addition to Madame Commanville, I owe much gratitude to her friend, Mademoiselle Maréchal, who helped at an early stage of the work to keep me clear of errors.

The book is dedicated to the memory of one friend; it owes its existence to the ever-helpful and active sympathy of another.

J. C. TARVER.

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LIST OF FLAUBERT'S WORKS.

Madame Bovary.

Salammbô.

L'Éducation Sentimentale.

La Tentation de Saint Antoine.

Trois Contes. (Un Cœur simple, Saint Julien l'Hospitalier, Hérodiade.)

\*Bouvard et Pécuchet.

\*Par les champs et par les grèves.

\*Lettres à George Sand, avec une étude par Guy de Maupassant.

\*Correspondance. Tomes I., II., III., IV.

Le Candidat. Comédie en quatre actes.

\* These were published after the author's death.



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## INTRODUCTORY NOTE

THE man whose life forms the subject of the following volume was a man to whom truth seemed the most sacred of all obligations. To attempt to portray his life and not to indicate wherein and why the portrait might be judged to deviate from the strictest rectitude in the matter of truth, would be to dishonour the memory of the man himself, to assume that he would be content to sail under colours that were not his own, that he would disavow his own personality in order to gain the popular favour.

In transferring the personality of any man from one nationality to another, we are at once encountered with a difficulty. It is possible by too strict a fidelity to mere letters to give a dishonest portrait. What is indecent in England is venial in France; on the other hand, France classes with improprieties many features in the ordinary commerce of English society. There are those Englishmen who look to France to supply them with unclean details, which they believe themselves to be unable to enjoy in the literature of their own country—to whom Zola is 'hot,' Daudet 'warm.' To place Flaubert anywhere within the range of this sort of appreciation would be to misrepresent him.

Further, in dealing with his correspondence one fact has always to be remembered: that of the four volumes of letters which have been published, *no single letter was written by Flaubert with the idea that it would or could at any time appear in print.*

There are many of us who write letters, who tell stories in private, whose publication would be an outrage on public decency. There is one rule for the conversation of the smoking-room, another for dinner and dessert, yet another for the magazine article. Freedom of language, and violence of expression, permissible in private correspondence with a very intimate friend, would be justly stigmatised as libellous or coarse

in works intended for publication. Therefore, while enough has been shown of the earlier letters to indicate the impetuous imagination of the youth afire with great thoughts, to whom the ordinary rules of conventional society were less than the stubble which we tread in September, the present editor has done his best throughout to eliminate everything that, by reason *only* of the variations of usage on the two sides of the Channel, on the one hand, and the conditions under which the letters were originally written, on the other, might incline the English reader to avert his gaze, and miss the opportunity of enjoying the society of one of the best and noblest men of the nineteenth century.









THE HOUSE AT CROISSET.

# LIFE AND LETTERS OF GUSTAVE FLAUBERT

## CHAPTER I

### CHILDHOOD—SCHOOL DAYS—LETTERS TO ERNEST CHEVALIER

ON the first of January 1831, a little boy living at Les Andelys, some twenty miles east of Rouen, received the following letter from another little boy :

‘Dear Friend,—You are right in saying that New Year’s day is a stupid thing. My friend they have just sent the grey-haired La Fayette the bravest of the brave, the liberty of the two worlds. Friend, I will send you some of my political, constitutional liberal speeches, you are right to say you will make me happy by coming to Rouen, it will please me very much, I wish you a happy New Year for 1831. Kiss your good family for me with all your heart.

‘The playmate that you have sent me has the air of being a good fellow, although I have only seen him once.

‘I will also send you some of my comedies. If you wish us to join writing, I will write comedy, and you shall write your dreams, and as there is a lady who comes to our house, and who always talks silly things to us, I will write them. I am not writing well because I have a box from Nogent to receive. Goodbye, reply to me as soon as possible.

‘Good bye, good health, your friend always,  
Reply to me as soon as possible I pray.’

Thus with the hazardous punctuation, and (in the original) with the doubtful orthography of extreme youth, at the age

of nine and three weeks, Gustave Flaubert wrote his first letter to a friend.

Thirty-four years later his last published letter to the same friend has the following passage :—

‘I do not accept your affectionate rebukes, my dear Ernest, although they have moved me to the bottom of my soul. It is in vain that we see one another only at distant intervals and for a short time, I think of you very often, be sure of that, and I miss you, my dear old man ! As we grow older, as the home becomes dispeopled, we are carried back to the old days, to the times of our youth. You have been too much mixed up with mine, you have for a long time played too large a part in my life for coldness or forgetfulness ever to arise on my side. I never go to my brother’s house at Rouen without looking at the dwelling of old Father Mignot, of which I still recollect the whole interior, even to the front of the chimney piece; Henry iv. with the fair Gabrielle, a neighing horse, etc. etc. When Easter comes round, I think of my visits to les Andelys, when we used to smoke pipe after pipe in the ruins of Château-Gaillard, and your poor father used to pour us out wine from Collioures, and carve us Amiens pies, laughing all the while so heartily at the absurdities I used to say. The other day I went to the College to see a small boy who had been commended to my notice by friends at Paris; the whole of my school life came back to my memory.’

By the time that this letter was written, the friends had wandered far apart; Ernest Chevalier had followed the ordinary routine of a capable juriconsult, and occupied one legal position after another in the French Magistracy; Gustave Flaubert had remained faithful to his first love, continued to busy himself with comedies and tragedies, and to record the absurdities with which his path through life was beset.

Ernest Chevalier was a successful man; he accomplished what his friends expected of him; he rose in his profession,



he married, he was successful; and he will be remembered because of the little boy who used to write to him in the holidays.

Gustave Flaubert was the son of Achille Cléophas Flaubert, surgeon-in-chief of the infirmary at Rouen, a man whose comparatively early death at the age of sixty-one was regarded as a public calamity in the town in which he had pursued his profession with the single-hearted devotion of an artist, and the large-mindedness of a man of genius. Though he was never permitted to accomplish the scientific task which he had proposed to himself, and to give the world the benefit of the carefully kept notes of his professional career, he was known beyond Rouen; and his son was more than once gratified by finding that his own name was familiar to men in distant places through the reputation of his father. 'Père Flaubert,' as he was commonly called at Rouen, was the son of a veterinary surgeon at Nogent-sur-Seine, and belonged thus to the province of Champagne, whose inhabitants are credited with a strain of chivalry and impetuosity foreign to the more cautious and cold nature of the Normans among whom he spent his maturity, and from whom he chose his wife. He is thus described by his son in *Madame Bovary*:—

'Canivet was on the point of administering theriacum, when the crack of a whip was heard in the distance; all the windows rattled, and a postchaise drawn by three horses at full gallop, splashed up to the ears, turned the corner of the market in one stride. It was Doctor Larivière.

'The apparition of a god would not have caused a greater disturbance. Bovary raised his hands, Canivet stopped short, and Homais pulled off his cap even before the doctor entered.

'He belonged to the great surgical school, which sprang from the dissecting table of Bichat, to that now lost generation of

practical philosophers, who cherishing their art with a fanatical love, practised it with elevation and sagacity. Every one trembled in his hospital when he was out of temper, and his students respected him so much, that they struggled to imitate him to the best of their ability, even as soon as they were started in life; so it came to pass that in all the towns in the neighbourhood there were recognised on their persons, his long merino comforter, and his full black coat, whose unbuttoned cuffs to some degree covered his muscular hands: very beautiful hands, that never wore gloves, as if to be more ready to dash in to the aid of suffering. Contemptuous of decorations, of honours, of Societies, hospitable, liberal, paternal to the poor, and practising virtue without believing in it, he would almost have passed for a saint, had not the sharpness of his wit made him terrible as a fiend. His look, more cutting than his instruments, went straight down into a man's soul, and through misstatements and modest reservations laid every lie bare; and thus he moved with that easy majesty, which is given by the consciousness of a mighty talent, of wealth, and of forty years of an industrious and irreproachable existence.

'At the door perceiving the cadaverous countenance of Emma stretched on her back, her mouth open, he knitted his brows. Then while appearing to listen to Canivet, he passed his forefinger under his nose and kept repeating:—

'Good—good—

'But he made a slight movement with his shoulders. Bovary noticed it: they looked at one another; and this man, accustomed as he was to the sight of sorrow, could not hold back a tear, which fell upon his shirt-frill.'

In this masterly fashion does the son draw the portrait of the father, by whom he himself was never understood.

On the mother's side, too, Gustave Flaubert was descended from a physician; her father had been a country doctor, who married a Mademoiselle Cambremer, to the great scandal of the noble families of Lower Normandy with which she was related. She was a woman to whom it fell to bear something more than the ordinary burden of sorrow, and



she played her part with dignity and resignation. She was a devoted mother.

The Flaubert family consisted of the father and mother, the eldest son, Achille, who afterwards succeeded his father in the Infirmary at Rouen, Gustave, nine years younger, and a daughter, Caroline, three years younger still. These two last children were distinguished by remarkable personal beauty—a royal personage once stopped to notice Gustave in the street—splendid alike in colouring and form, they unconsciously attracted the homage which is ever rendered to comeliness of person.

Up to the age of nine Gustavus had not learned to read ; while his sister easily acquired the art, he remained confused and stupefied in the presence of the mysterious forms of letters. Meanwhile, his mind was not inactive : on the one hand, he was attended by a veritable jewel of a nurse, descended from a notable family of postilions located in a country rich in folklore and semi-historical traditions, and who had supplemented her orally acquired knowledge by a somewhat extensive course of reading during a tedious and disabling illness ; and on the other hand, opposite the Infirmary, lived the Père Mignot—a mine of tales of all sorts, and who was ever willing to spend long hours reading *Don Quixote* to the handsome dreamy son of his neighbour, the loved, the respected, the dreaded Père Flaubert.

Thus the small boy early acquired the habit of listening, and of listening with discrimination, though in all the practical concerns of life he was of a simplicity almost incomprehensible. The same child who could perceive the absurdities of the conversation of his father's friends, and propose at the age of nine to turn them to literary uses, was easily taken in by the simplest trick. 'Go and see if I am in the kitchen,' an old servant would say, who found his

company inconvenient; and the child would gravely march to the kitchen and repeat, to the mystification of the cook, 'Peter sent me to see if he is here.'

It used to be, and still is to some extent, the custom in France to send the sons of well-to-do parents to boarding-schools, which are often situated in the towns in which the parents reside. On Thursday afternoons, and from Saturday to Monday morning, the boys returned to their parents; otherwise they lived in the cloistered seclusion of the college, subject to a discipline inflexible and military in its nature, performing regular exercise at regular hours, solemnly marching from class-room to class-room, watched both during lessons and the short periods of recreation by an inferior class of ushers, who had nothing to do with teaching beyond maintaining order during the lessons of the professors. This system, by rendering morality a mere question of discipline, enforced by a despised, and not unfrequently contemptible spy, almost necessarily alienated the sympathy of all noble-minded boys. To it young Gustave was submitted a little before he was nine years old, having rapidly, in the presence of necessity, surmounted the reading difficulty, and for nearly ten years he remained under its, to him, unbearably irritating influence.

During this time Ernest Chevalier continued to be his most intimate friend; but there were others also: Alfred le Poittevin, whose sister was afterwards the mother of Guy de Maupassant; Louis Bouilhet, the poet; Ernest le Marié, and others, were members with Flaubert of a small circle of romantic youths, who mutually excited one another into a condition of literary exaltation which, in one or two cases, passed beyond the limits of mere romantic imagining. One of them hung himself. From the morbid excesses of his companions Flaubert was protected by the healthy home-

life which he enjoyed whenever opportunity offered. His taste for literature was indirectly encouraged by his parents, who allowed the children and their friends to make a stage of the billiard table, and declaim tragedies and comedies from that elevation to an audience such as the household could supply, with the addition of one or two sympathetic friends. Caroline Flaubert took charge of the dresses; the mother's wardrobe was ransacked for cast-off clothes; and programmes were boldly issued, whose comprehensiveness would have caused the company of the Théâtre Français some misgiving.

Ernest Chevalier received the following letter in April 1832, the writer was not yet eleven years old :—

‘ Victory Victory Victory Victory Victory you will come one of these days my friend, the theatre, the bills, everything is ready. When you come, Amadeus, Edmund, Mme. Chevalier, mother, two servants and perhaps some boys will come to see us play, we shall give four pieces, which you do not know, but you will soon have learned them. The tickets for the first, second and third rows are ready, there will be stalls, there will also be drops, scenery. The curtain is arranged, perhaps there will be ten or twelve people. Then we must have spirit and not be afraid, there will be a sentry at the door, who will be little Lerond, and his sister will be a ballet-dancer. I do not know if you have seen *Parcognac* we shall play it, with a piece by Berquin, another by Scribe, and a dramatised proverb by Marmontel, it is useless for me to tell you their titles, you do not know them I think, if you knew it, when I was told, that you were not coming, I was in a horrible rage. If by chance you were not to come, I would sooner go on all fours like the dogs of King Louis Philippe (*taken from the Journal of Caricatures*,) to Andelys to look for you, and I think you would do as much, for a love, so to say, brotherly unites us. Yes, I who have sentiment I would go a thousand leagues, if it were necessary, to meet the best of my friends, for nothing is so sweet as friendship, oh sweet friendship ! how much has been seen to

be done by this sentiment! without that tie how should we live? One sees this sentiment even in the smallest animals, without friendship how would the feeble live? How would women and children find subsistence? Permit me, my dear friend, these gentle reflections, but I swear to you that they are not made up, and that I have not tried to make rhetoric, but I speak to you with the truth of a true friend. The cholera morbus is hardly yet at the Infirmary. Your father is going on the same. Come to Rouen. Farewell.'

In this letter, again, in spite of the precocity of the thought, there are fearful struggles with the spelling, and the writer does not 'stand upon his points.' The imaginative faculty was far in advance of the mechanical powers; even before this, when the small boy was still unable to read, he would improvise scenes and dialogues, in which he himself took all the parts, after sitting dreaming for a long time, like any other child, with his thumb in his mouth.

Passionate friendship continued to be a ruling sentiment with Flaubert. Old friends were never forgotten; but as they fell out of his life, others stepped into the vacant place, without, however, disturbing the strength of the old attachment. In his boyhood his friends were generally older than himself: Ernest Chevalier was two or three years his senior; Alfred le Poittevin, whom he adored, and whose early death he never ceased to speak of as leaving an unfilled void in his life, was six years older. In the last years, when all had left him, he found in the affection of young Guy de Maupassant, something of the same happiness; two months before his death, he wrote:—

'My young man, you are right to love me, for your old fellow is very fond of you. I at once read your volume, three parts of which, for that matter, I already knew. We will go over it again together. . . . Your dedication has stirred a world of reminiscences in me,—your uncle Alfred,—your grand-



mother,—your mother,—and the old chap had for some moments a swelling heart and a tear in his eyelids.' ✓

From the beginning, Flaubert's friendships were founded on literary sympathy: his heart was always open to a man, or woman, who would talk books with him. Meanwhile, there was nothing of the pale student about him; in body, as well as in intellect, he developed harmoniously as well as rapidly, and eventually grew to be looked on as a giant.

During his boyhood the family used to spend the summer holidays at Trouville, then a small fishing village; and here they made the acquaintance of the family of Admiral Collier, whose eldest daughter, afterwards Mrs. Tennant, thus writes of him:—

'Gustave Flaubert was then like a young Greek. In the flower of his youth, he was tall and slender, supple and graceful as an athlete, unconscious of the gifts which he possessed morally and physically, caring little for the impression that he produced, and entirely indifferent to accepted forms. His dress consisted of a red flannel shirt, rough blue cloth trousers, a scarf of the same colour tightly bound around his waist, and a hat placed anyhow on his head, which was as often as not bare. When I used to speak to him of celebrity, or influence to be exercised, as things desirable, and which I should value, he used to listen, smile, and seem superbly indifferent. He admired what was beautiful in nature, art and literature, and would live for that, he used to say, without any consideration of advantage. He never gave a thought to ambition or gain. Was it not sufficient for a thing to be true and beautiful? His great delight was to find something that he judged worthy of admiration. The charm of his society was in his enthusiasm for all that was noble, and the charm of his mind in an intense individuality. He hated all hypocrisy. What was wanting in his nature, was interest in external things, in useful things. If some one happened to say, that religion, politics, business, had as great an interest as literature and art, he opened his eyes with amazement and compassion. To be a

man of letters, an artist, that alone made it worth his while to live.'

This sentiment had already been strongly expressed in a letter written in his thirteenth year, wherein after telling his friend that he was occupied in writing a romance, of which Isabella of Bavaria was the heroine, he said :—

'You think that I feel your absence, yes, you are right, and if I had not a Queen of France of the fifteenth century in my head and at the end of my pen, I should be completely sick of life, and long ago a bullet would have delivered me from this comic farce that is called life.'

Strong expressions of this kind need not be taken too seriously on the lips of a boy of thirteen ; but as a similar strain continued through the letters written in the next eight years, and as the feeling involved was not peculiar to Flaubert, there is some reason for inquiring into the external conditions which produced this violence of sentiment in the boys of France during Flaubert's youth.

It was the period of the literary revolution ; of the rise of Romanticism. In Paris at this time a school broke out into open mutiny on the question of a disrespectful criticism of Victor Hugo by a master. This, and other schoolboy excesses, were simply the natural reaction from unwise repression.

Of all people, the French least understand liberty. Whatever the outward form of government in France, the majority always assumes to itself to prescribe for the minority, not only what it shall do, but what it shall think, and pushes this claim to its extreme logical conclusion. The possible power of fiction in moulding the national mind to acquiescence in a particular form of government, and especially its influence upon the young, was divined by the statesmen of Louis xiv., whose imitator, Napoleon I., also wished the State

to control what the young should read. In spite of the Revolution, the French schools, the schools in which the directing classes were educated, steadily repressed freedom of thought, and inculcated adherence to the stately forms of the classic models. The Academy flung itself on its knees before Charles x., and petitioned that no work of the Romantic School should be allowed to be performed on the stage. If a boy was discovered to be reading Victor Hugo, the horror of his teachers—their unaffected horror—was only to be compared with the state of mind of an English Evangelical family, whose younger members might be detected poring over the works of Miss Braddon on a Sabbath afternoon. Church and State were alike felt to be in danger; at the same time there was a genuine artistic distaste for literature, which seemed to defy all preconceived standards, and to combine a chaos of formlessness with an equally chaotic morality. To declaim the stately Alexandrines of Racine and Corneille, imitate the honoured prose of Fénelon, accept Molière as light reading, was allowed to the French youth; but outside the circle of accepted authors, of the word-mongers, who never called anything by its right name, and saw the world not at first hand, but in a kind of camera-obscura, whose images were reflected from figures no longer existent, French boys were not supposed to read anything; and one of the most hateful and hated duties of the unfortunate ushers was the unremitting search for smuggled volumes. English people have not been exempt, especially in certain religious connections, from the same suspicion of literature. Head-masters of schools controlled by the Society of Friends have been known to warn their departing pupils, in bidding them farewell, on no account to read the pernicious works of one William Shakespeare; but in England there has never prevailed the

same universal blockade against certain schools of literature, that was, and perhaps still is, one of the most marked features of French education. To the majority of boys such a matter is of small importance : they have no inclination to read, and feel no indignation at being deprived of the privilege. All reading is lessons with them ; and as, from their point of view, no boy in his senses would read a book for himself, it would make little difference to them whether the work interdicted were Marmontel or Chateaubriand ; Byron, or the *Rasselas* of Dr. Johnson. On the boys gifted with the literary temperament, on the other hand, the restrictions produced a sense of grievance, which lasted so long as life lasted ; it seemed to them that all authority was banded together in enmity against what they felt to be the best thing in life ; that certain books alone were permitted ; inclined them to believe that other books alone were worth reading ; and the result was, that they not only rebelled openly against, or despised their teachers, but, in all kinds of clandestine ways, prematurely studied works to measure whose true value and true meaning they had not had the necessary experience of life. Before he was seventeen, Flaubert was reading Victor Hugo, Byron, Shakespeare, Rabelais, Montaigne, and early acquired the conviction that

7 there was no such thing as indecency in true literature. For a while, the literature of the schoolmasters seemed to him not to be literature at all. English schools of the same period do not seem to have bothered themselves with English literature in any form. We see in Thackeray traces of a revolt against literary despotism, but it is against the despotism of Latin and Greek ; he had no need to be indignant that G. P. R. James and Walter Scott were withheld from him, and that Addison's *Cato* was forced upon him. There are some advantages in belonging to a nation



which only intermittently takes literature seriously. Flaubert and his schoolfellows were cut off from the advantage of discussing, with men of mature experience, the questions which most interested them, the authors they liked best; consequently they were unable to analyse and estimate mere rhetoric, the cynicism of disappointment; they did not know that the poet sings, like the linnet, 'because he must'; that the mood which produces *Lara*, is compatible with a great deal of dining out; and that that despairing poetess, Miss Bunion, 'ate a mutton chop for breakfast every morning of her blighted existence.'

On August the fourteenth 1835, Flaubert being now thirteen years and seven months old, wrote to Ernest Chevalier :—

'I see with indignation that the censorship of the stage is to be established again, and the liberty of the Press abolished. Yes,—this law will pass, for the representatives of the people are nothing but a foul heap of mercenaries. Their aim is self-interest, turpitude is their hobby, a brute pride their honour, their soul a mud heap; but one day, a day that will soon come, the people will begin the third revolution; then take care of your head, look out for rivers of blood. It is of his conscience that the man of letters is now being robbed, of his artist's conscience. Yes,—our age is fertile in sudden and bloody changes. Fare thee well,—and as for us, let us concern ourselves always with art, with art, that is greater than peoples, than crowns and kings, always there, floating on Enthusiasm with her heavenly diadem.'

Strip this letter of its boyish rhetoric and you have Flaubert's life; from the determination here expressed he never deviated.

In a letter written two years afterwards, a passage occurs in a different vein, very characteristic of his later life :—

'Old Langlois and Orlowski dined at our house yesterday, and they made a pretty good thing of it, drinking, stuffing,

ranting. Achille, myself and Bizet are invited for Sunday to go and fuddle ourselves, smoke and listen to music at Orlowskis'. All the Polish refugees will be there. There are thirty of them. It is a national festival; every Easter Sunday they have a similar feast in the house of one of them. They eat sausages, black puddings, hard boiled eggs, pig's flesh, and no one is permitted to go out till he has been drunk and has spewed, five or six times.'

The same letter concludes with violent jubilation over the detection of one of the hated ushers in compromising circumstances, whom he credits with having 'a dirty shirt, dirty stockings, and a dirty soul.'

In April 1874, Flaubert published a volume called *The Temptation of St. Anthony*—a sort of prose poem, in which humanity, represented by the saint, is assailed by all the forms of religion and erratic imaginations possible to mankind in the fourth century A.D. The book had been written three times; the first manuscript was destroyed, under circumstances hereafter to be described, in 1849; the second at the time when Flaubert abandoned his house to the Prussians billeted upon him in 1870. In 1839 we find the germ of this book, to which he has already alluded in December 1838 :—

'I am hardly reading at all now, I have again taken up a piece of work long laid aside, a mystery, a hash, of which, I think, I have already spoken to you. Here it is in two words. Satan leads a man, (Smar,) into infinite space, they both rise in the air to an immeasurable distance. Then Smar, to whom so much is disclosed, is filled with pride. He believes that all the mysteries of creation and infinity are revealed to him; but Satan leads him still higher. Then he is frightened, he trembles, this vast abyss seems to devour him, in the void he is feeble. They descend again to earth. There is his own soil, he says, that it is to live there that he was created, and everything in nature is subjected to him. Then a storm rises;

the sea threatens to swallow him up. He again admits his weakness, his nothingness. Satan proceeds to take him amongst mankind. First the savage sings of his happiness, his wandering life, but all of a sudden, a desire to depart to the city seizes him, he cannot resist it, he goes. There you have the barbarous races, who become civilised. Secondly they come to the town, to the king racked with pain, a prey to the seven deadly sins, to the poor, to the married, into the church, which is deserted. All parts of the building take up their voice to bewail this, from the vault of the nave to the flag-stones, all speak and curse God. Then the church having become blasphemous, falls. In all this there is a personage, who takes part in all the events, and turns them to farce. He is Yuk the god of the grotesque. Thus in the first scene, while Satan was corrupting Smar through his pride, Yuk was pledging a married woman to surrender herself to the first-comer, without distinction. It is laughter beside tears and agonies; filth beside blood. At last, Smar is disgusted with the world, he would like the whole thing done with; but Satan on the contrary, goes on to make him experience all the passions, and all the wretchedness that he has seen. He bears him on winged horses to the banks of the Ganges. There, monstrous and fantastic orgies, debauchery such as I can imagine it, but debauchery wearies him. Again after this he experiences ambition. He becomes poet; after his vanished illusions his despair becomes immense; the cause of heaven is like to be lost. Smar has not yet experienced love. Then a woman appears . . . a woman . . . he loves her, he has become beautiful again, but Satan falls in love with her also. They each try to seduce her for themselves. Who will have the victory? Satan you think? No! Yuk the grotesque. This woman is Truth, and the whole thing ends in a monstrous union.'

Reminiscences of *Faust* are obvious enough in this strange rigmorole, written by a boy of eighteen, but the position of the god of the grotesque is individual, and Flaubert's own. Under another form Yuk appears in the published *St. Anthony*; he attends on the debaucheries and death-bed of

Madame Bovary; he waits on the footsteps of all the characters in the *Sentimental Education*; we catch glimpses of him in *Salammbô*. He is in the last line of the *Herodias*; in more than one passage of the *St. Julian*; slightly shocks us in the *Story of a Simple Soul*; and is the moving spirit, the life and breath, of *Bouvard and Pécuchet*.

About this period, Ernest Chevalier had left school and gone to Paris to read law, where he was not particularly happy. Flaubert, in reply to some of his wailings, wrote the following edifying letter under the nose of the 'Sieur Amyot,' who was lecturing on the theory of eclipses, to an apparently unsympathetic audience:—

'And you too! Why! I credited you with more common sense than myself, dear friend, do you too squall and sob? What? Good heavens! what is the matter, pray, with you? Know you that the young generation of students is superbly stupid; formerly it had more go; it amused itself with women, sword thrusts, orgies; now it drapes itself after Byron, dreams of despair, and padlocks its heart to its own content. It is, who shall look the palest, and say the loudest, "I am surfeited, palled!" How sad! surfeited at eighteen! Is there no more love, no more glory, no more work! Is that all burned out? No more nature? No more flowers for the young man? No, —let us leave all that! Let us do our sadness in art, since we feel the more strongly in that direction, but in life let us do our merriment, let the cork fly, let the pipe be filled, let the wench disrobe! damn it all! and if one evening in the twilight during an hour of fog and snow, we have the spleen, let it come, but not often; one must scrape one's heart from time to time with a bit of suffering to get the whole scab off it. There! That is what I advise you to do, and what I myself struggle to put in practice.'

So much for Sieur Amyot and his theory of eclipses. Among the absurdities collected by Flaubert for the second, never finished, part of *Bouvard et Pécuchet*, is the following



statement of Monseigneur Dupanloup occurring in a treatise on education : 'The study of Mathematics by repressing sentiment and imagination, sometimes renders the explosion of the passions terrible.' Most of Flaubert's letters at this period were written during mathematical lessons, and tend to confirm the dictum of the Archbishop ; these studies certainly convinced him temporarily of the futility of his existence :—

'O what a lot of money I would give to be either more stupid or less intellectual ! Atheist or mystic ! but at any rate something complete and whole, an identity, in a word something.'

These words seem to have been suggested by a disquisition on square roots.

At Easter 1840 he spent the usual holiday at Les Andelys, and on his return wrote as follows :—

'It is thus that I am made, happy days always give me a thousand sad ones, joy that is passed depresses me ; holiday days for me have always dismal morrows.

'I really felt while returning to Rouen that something of my happiness was departing ; the sum of felicity apportioned to each of us is small, and when we have spent a little bit of it, we are altogether gloomy. I was sitting on the outside of the coach in silence, my face to the wind, rocked by the swing of the gallop. I felt the road fly under me, and with it all the years of my youth, I thought of all my other expeditions to les Andelys, I plunged myself up to the neck in all these memories, I compared them vaguely to the smoke of my pipe which was flying away, leaving the air all perfumed behind it. As I approached Rouen, I began to feel the life of fact, the present ; they began to take hold of me, and with them the work of every day, the life of detail, the working table, the accursed hours, the cavern in which my thought struggles and fights to death. Yes,—there are days, like yesterday, for instance, when one is sad, when one's heart is big with tears, when one loathes oneself, and could devour one's own heart for

rage. What one should do, is, not think of the past, not say to one's self: "there must still be sunshine there, it is seventy two hours since I was in such a place, I still see the shadow of my head on the highroad, flying after the horses, and a thousand other follies"; one must look at the future, stretch out one's neck to see the horizon, fling one's self forward, put down one's head, and on quickly, without listening to the wailing voice of tender memories, which would fain call one back to the valley of everlasting sorrow. One must not look into the abyss, for in its depths there is an inexpressible charm that draws us down.'

## CHAPTER II

### THE LAW STUDENT—CORRESPONDENCE WITH HIS SISTER

IN the summer of 1839 Flaubert finally left school, and, after a short journey in the South of France and Corsica with Dr. Jules Cloquet, a friend of his father's, went to Paris, like his friend Chevalier, to study law. From this time, till his return home four years later, his chief correspondent was his sister; and in these letters we get a glimpse of the home life, and of the vigorous, active, outward personality of the lad whose thoughts were often so sombre. The Flaubert family continued their love of acting long after their childhood, and though they do not seem to have continued performances on the stage, they were in the habit of assuming the parts of sundry fictitious characters for one another's amusement; one of Gustave's chief rôles was that of the 'garçon,' a personage whose characteristics are not otherwise indicated. We know of him that he had a marked laugh, which we may assume to have been inane, loud and fatuous, and that Gustave once discovered an epitaph for him: 'Here lies one given to all the vices.' On the whole, he does not seem to have been an estimable character, and perhaps the less we know of him the better. This vein of buffoonery remained with Flaubert all his life; he would do anything to amuse his friends; anything to make the people that he liked laugh heartily. Even in his correspondence he

occasionally poses in a character not his own ; and late in life wrote a sham autobiography, for George Sand, of the Rev. Father Cruchard, whose character, he professed, was his own.

The study of law was not congenial to Flaubert ; he took it up in obedience to the wishes of his father, a practical man, who saw no future in literature, and seems to have classed literary men with the sword-thrusters and ballet-dancers, whom Molière's teacher of philosophy so profoundly despised.

Maxime Ducamp thus describes the first apparition of Flaubert upon him during these days of reading law ; he was living in rooms with Ernest le Marié, a former college friend of Flaubert's at Rouen :—

‘One day in March, 1843, while le Marié was hammering out Beethoven's funeral march on the piano, and I was slinging rhymes, we heard a peal of the bell, violent, imperious, the ring of a master. I saw a tall fellow come in, with a long fair beard, and his hat over his ear. Gustave Flaubert was then twenty-one years old. He was of heroic beauty. With his white skin slightly flushed upon the cheeks, his long fine floating hair, his tall broad-shouldered figure, his abundant golden beard, his enormous eyes—the colour of the green of the sea—veiled under black eyelashes, with his voice as sonorous as the blast of a trumpet, his exaggerated gestures, and resounding laugh ; he was like those young Gallic chiefs who fought against the Roman armies.’

Meanwhile this overpowering giant was writing to the little sister at home.

‘May 16, 1841.

‘Thank you heartily, good mouse, for the letter that you sent me yesterday ; it was dainty and clever, like yourself, full of flashes of wit, which I have learned by heart, and which I mean to pass on as my own on the first opportunity. . . .

‘Keep a brave heart, dear old mouse, for next Saturday ! Come up now ! Assurance ! Thunder and lightning ! There



we are—one two—one two—not too quick—close the shakes, brrr—— the little runs, don't let us lose our head !

'Since you are doing geometry and trigonometry, I will give you a problem : A ship is on the sea, it left Boston laden with cotton, it is of 200 tons burden, it sails towards Havre, the mainmast is broken, there is a cabin boy on the fore-peak, the passengers are twelve in number, the wind blows N.E.E., the chronometer reads a quarter past three in the afternoon, the month is May. Required—the Captain's age.'

'July, 1841.

'The holidays are approaching. I warn you both, however, of one thing, you and mamma; during the stay that I am going to make at Rouen, you must be agreeable, you must have pleasant faces; the same remark may be addressed to Mistress Fargues. Suffer as much as you like, in the back, in the head; have chilblains, rashes, what not! but act so as to make the house comfortable to me. However you behave, I shall always be happier there than here.

'I breathe a little more now, and consider my job nearly done. I am merry, jocose, I burn to climb on to the coach, I see myself arriving at Rouen on Tuesday morning, ascending the stairs at a run, bawling, and kissing you.

'From time to time I give vent to peals of laughter in the style of the "garçon" to amuse myself, and I do Father Couillère as I look at myself in the glass.'

'March 1842.

'Dialogue which took place an hour ago.

'Personages : MYSELF.—MY BEDMAKER.

'(I hear a noise).

'BEDMAKER (*from the landing*).—It is me, sir; don't disturb yourself. (*Enter BEDMAKER.*) I am bringing you some matches, sir, for you want them.

'MYSELF.—Yes.

'BEDMAKER.—The gentleman burns a good many of them. He works so much. Ah, how he works! I could not do as much, I who speak to you.

'MYSELF.—Yes.

'BEDMAKER.—The gentleman is soon a-going! You are right.

'MYSELF.—Yes.

‘BEDMAKER.—That will do you a world of good just to take the air a little; for since you have been here, I am sure, I am sure . . .

‘MYSELF (*pointedly*).—Yes.

‘BEDMAKER (*raising her voice*).—Your parents ought to be pleased to have a son like you. (This is her fixed idea, she has already told Hamard so.)

‘MYSELF.—Yes.

‘BEDMAKER.—The fact is, you see, nothing pleases parents more than to see their children work well. Ah well! When I see Alphonsine at work, there’s nothing pleases me so much as that. Just you work well, you work well, that is what I say to her every day, naughty idle girl! You like to stay like that doing nothing! But I must be telling you, she is a little delicate, my poor Alphonsine. Yes, she has a little gathering just now, that keeps her from sewing. She is not so bad as I am—no—no. Ah yes, when I was young, I had finer features than she has; ah yes, see you, she has not as fine features as I have; that is what I say to her every day: Alphonsine, you have not as fine features as I have. But you, sir, it is not that way with you, it is the head that works, it is memory that you want. Yes, certainly, yes, you will need to take the air.”

‘She was still speaking, long after I had ceased to listen.

‘Ah mouse, good mouse, dear old mouse! take care to have good strong cheeks for next week, for I simply long to kiss them for you. I will give myself a regular bout. Yes, when I think of it, I shall certainly not be able to keep from hurting you.’

While enjoying the holiday looked forward to in the last letter, Flaubert again replied to a jeremiad from Ernest Chevalier, who had remained in Paris:—

‘What! old scamp! to what a condition “a man like you” is reduced! Take it easy, my fine fellow, take it easy! Instead of reading so much law do a little philosophy, read Rabelais, Montaigne, Horace, or some other old chap, who has seen life under a less stormy sky, and learn once for all, that you must not ask apple-trees for oranges, France for sunshine, women for love, life for happiness. Up with you! think of

soup, of meat, of *pâtés de foie gras*, of Chambertin. How can you complain of life, when there are still beds wherein a man may console himself with love, and a bottle of wine to lose his senses withal! Pluck up your courage, confound it! take to a severe course of life, play larks at night, break the gas lamps, have rows with cabmen, smoke like a chimney, go to cafés, bolt without paying, smash in hats, belch in peoples' faces, disperse your melancholy, and thank Providence. For the century in which you were born is a happy century, railways furrow the fields, there are bituminous clouds, and rains of coal, asphalt-paths, and wooden pavements, penitentiaries for young felons, and savings'-banks for thrifty domestics who go there incontinent to deposit, what they have stolen from their masters. M. Hébert is public prosecutor, and bishops issue pastorals, whores go to mass, kept women talk at least of morals, and the government defends religion; the unfortunate Théophile Gautier is accused of immorality by M. Faure, authors are put in prison, and pamphleteers are paid. But the funniest thing of all is the Executive protecting sound morals and repelling outrages upon orthodox views. Human justice is indeed to me the most farcical thing in the world; one man judging another is a sight, which would make me die of laughing, if it did not stir my compassion, and if I were not at present being compelled to study the string of absurdities, in virtue of which he is a judge. I can see nothing more stupid than jurisprudence, if it is not the study of jurisprudence; I work at it with profound disgust, and that deprives me of all heart, and spirit for any thing else. I am even beginning to get a little anxious about my examination, but only a little, and I won't disturb my spleen any the more for that. Here is the summer coming back, that is all that I want, may the Seine be warm for me to bathe in! the scent of the flowers be good! the shadows of the trees deep!

'Do you know the epitaph of Henri Heine? Here it is: "He loved the roses of Brenta." That might well be mine. The "garçon's epitaph": "Here lies a man abandoned to all the vices."

'Often I shrug my shoulders with pity, when I think of all the trouble that we give ourselves, all the anxiety which gnaws

us, to be successful, to get ourselves a fortune and a name; how empty all that is! how pitiful! To wear a black coat from morning to evening, to have boots, braces, gloves, books, opinions, push one's self, get one's self pushed, introduce one's self, do one's bow, and go one's way! O Lord!

'Where is my Fontarabian shore, where the sand is golden, the sea blue, the houses black, birds sing among the ruins? Again there are known to me paths in the snow, the air is keen, the wind wails in the hollows of the mountains. There the solitary shepherd whistles his wandering dogs, there he expands his bare chest and breathes at his ease, and the air is balmy with the perfume of larch.

'Who will give me back the Mediterranean breezes, for on those shores the heart expands, the myrtles shed their scent, there is a murmuring of waves. Hurrah for sun, orange trees, palms, lotus, boats with streamers, cool pavilions paved with marble, where the wainscots breathe of love. Oh—if I had a tent made of reeds and bamboo on the banks of the Ganges, how would I listen all night to the ripple of the current in the rushes, to cooing birds perched on bright-stemmed trees!

'But, damn it all! I say. Shall I ever walk with my own feet in the sands of Syria? Where the red horizon dazzles, where the earth rises in burning spirals, and eagles poise in the fiery sky? Shall I never see the cities of the embalmed dead, where hyenas bark kennelled under the mummies of kings at the time when the evening comes, and the hour, when camels crouch by the wells. In those countries the stars are four times as big as ours, the sunshine scorches, women writhe and spring under kisses and embraces, they wear bracelets and rings of gold on their feet and hands, and robes of fine gauze.

'Only sometimes, when the sun is setting, I imagine that I am arriving all of a sudden at Arles, twilight illumines the amphitheatre, and gilds the marble tombs of the *Elis-campi*; and I begin my journey again, I go further, still further, like a leaf borne on the wind.

'A reminiscence is a fine thing, it almost amounts to a regretted longing.'

Among the many strange contrasts in Flaubert's character,



his intimate friends noted the voluptuousness of his imagination and the purity of his life.

The noisy rioting of the student, which he describes in this letter, and humorously recommends to Ernest Chevalier, bored him infinitely. His pleasures were entirely literary. Endless discussions as to the merits of poets and playwrights, arguments on every possible subject, from the nature of the soul and immortality to the merits of a music-hall song, were the chief occupation of the small knot of students with whom he associated. He visited a few houses, especially the studio of Pradier, the sculptor, which was a kind of Bohemian literary club, and spent many of his afternoons reading to the daughters of Admiral Collier, whose family were then living in Paris.

Meanwhile, he continued to be horribly bored by the lectures on law.

‘If you think from reading my letters, that I am not miserable, my poor mouse, you are as far out of it as you can be. . . . If you had an idea of the life that I lead, you would imagine it without difficulty. Montaigne, my old Montaigne, said: “We must embeast ourselves to be wise.” I am always so *embeasted*, that it may pass for wisdom, and even for virtue. Sometimes I long to go at my table with my fists, and make everything fly to smithereens, then, when the fit is over, I perceive by my clock, that I have lost half-an-hour in lamentations, and I set myself to blacken paper, and turn over pages with more speed than ever.’

Maxime Ducamp confirms this description of his methods of work where law was the subject.

‘How often have I seen him push away his *Code Civile* and say: “I don’t understand a word of it, it’s raving nonsense.” He then betook himself to the commentaries, and found that they were raving nonsense too.’

‘His method of working was hardly practical; under the

pretence of taking notes, he copied the books upon the subjects that he had to study; now, he copied mechanically, thinking of something else; the result was physical fatigue, and an accumulation of valueless papers.'

In May 1842 the first railway from Paris to Rouen was opened. Flaubert alluded to the event as follows:—

'Paris is no better favoured than Rouen in the matter of the railway, and if you are bored with hearing it talked about, you are just in the same plight as myself. It is impossible to go anywhere without hearing people say: "Ah, I am off to Rouen! I come from Rouen! Shall you go to Rouen?" Never has the capital of Neustria made such a sensation at Lutetia Parisiorum. One is simply stewed in it.'

The next month a long letter full of the horrors of law-lectures concluded as follows:—

'When I think of all of you, anyhow, something good and gentle breathes fresh life into me, and cheers me; a thousand tender happy suggestions come back to my heart, and I go from one to the other watching you all from here, as you move, speak with the tones of your own voices, get up and sit down in those clothes of yours, that I know. At this moment, for example, good mousey, I have your full gentle laugh in my ears: that laugh for which I would do myself to death in buffooneries, for which I would give my very last grimace, my last drop of saliva; so much so, that sometimes alone in my room I pull faces at myself in the looking-glass, or utter the cry of the "garçon" as if you were there to see me and admire me; for I am very much bored by my present audience.'

Meanwhile, to others Flaubert did not appear to be particularly miserable at Paris. 'His health,' says Maxime Ducamp, 'which nothing had disturbed permitted him to endure fatigue with impunity; in vain did he spend the nights in working at law, of which he understood nothing whatever; ran about the whole day, dined at a restaurant,

went to the theatre, he continued none the less alert in his own sluggish way, mixing pleasure and study, playing ducks and drakes with his money, spending fifty francs on his dinner one day, living the next day on a crust of bread and a cake of chocolate, chanting prose, howling verse, going mad over a joke, which he repeated to the point of surfeit, filling everything with his noise, despising women whom his beauty attracted, coming to wake me up at three o'clock in the morning to look at an effect of moonlight on the Seine, in despair at not being able to find good Pont L'Evêque cheese at Paris, inventing sauces to suit brill, and wishing to slap the face of Gustave Planche, who had spoken ill of Victor Hugo.'

Meanwhile, the silent anxious mother at home was beginning to have misgivings as to the possible result of the examination; and, mother-like, was proceeding to take highly irregular steps in the hope of softening the heart of an examiner. Her son did not sympathise with her efforts in this direction:—

'I entreat mother not to pledge M. Gétillat to make interest on my behalf with gentlemen, who may be of his acquaintance. I should be very much humiliated by it, and all these tricks are not in my line. To get oneself recommended by one's friends is bad enough, but by ladies! it is a little low, a little too strong for me. Besides "men like me" are not made to be ploughed. I try to get up my cheek and do the swell, none the less I am not over-confident. Can this possibly be an excess of modesty?

'Friend Hamard (he afterwards married Caroline Flaubert, and was the father of Madame Commanville) has just spent twenty-four hours in prison for having refused to go on guard. I went to see him. He was rotting on the damp straw of the dungeons, and was studying the laws in that abode, where those are confined who break them.'

Ernest Chevalier seems also to have been concerned at the

possible outcome of Flaubert's methods of pursuing the study of jurisprudence, and got his answer as follows :—

‘Do I long to be successful, I, to be a great man? a man known in a district, in a department, in three provinces, a thin man, a man with a weak digestion? Have I ambition, like shoe-blacks, who aspire to be boot-makers, drivers to be stud-grooms, footmen to play the master, your man of ambition to be a deputy or a minister, to wear a ribbon, be a town councillor? All that seems to me very dismal, and attracts me as little as a fourpenny dinner or a humanitarian lecture. But it is after all everybody's mania; and were it only to be singular, not from good taste, for the sake of good breeding, not from inclination, it is a good thing now to remain among the crowd, and leave all that to the scum, who are forever pushing themselves and swarm in every street. As for us, let us stay at home, let us watch the public pass from the height of our balcony; and if from time to time we are over-bored, well, let us spit on their heads, and then calmly continue our talk, and watch the sun setting in the west.’

In November 1842 the student of law was seized with a fit of economy.

‘I have made a contract with a purveyor in the neighbourhood to be fed; I have in front of me thirty dinners duly paid for, if dinners they can be called. Mother will perhaps be surprised at my economical notion; it is not epicurean; but convenient and cheap. In the matter of rapid eating I surpass all the customers of the establishment. I affect a preoccupied style there, at once dark and careless, which makes me laugh prodigiously when I am alone in the street. The proprietor is full of respect for me, my tall stature has prejudiced him in favour of my stomach. You ask me if I have an arm chair; my sitting apparatus consists of only three chairs, and a kind of divan, which can serve at once as box, bed, library, and place to put my slippers away in. I think it might also be turned into a dog-kennel or stable for a pony. It is the bed which I destine for my parents, when they come to see me. I perceive



that I have said something rude in the attempt to be witty and do the agreeable.

‘In all the comedies in the world sons invent a heap of humbug to bamboozle their fathers, and get money out of them ; I have no humbug to invent, but I do want some money (money, always money, this is the word they invariably have in their mouths). I have the sum of thirty-six francs and some centimes left. You will draw attention to the fact, that I have paid for my furniture, and I have further been obliged to buy a heap of things, shovels, tongs, wood to warm “a man like me,” and that moreover I stayed eight days at a hotel, etc. Therefore, I beg father to tell me, where I can go and handle a bit of tin.’

The simple youth, who wrote the above ingenuous lines, had not escaped notice in the capital. Through the connection formed with Pradier he had been introduced to Victor Hugo, of whom he wrote in January 1843 :—

‘You are expecting details about Victor Hugo, what do you want me to say about him ? He is a man like anybody else, with a fairly ugly face, and a fairly common exterior. He has splendid teeth, a fine forehead, no eyelashes nor eyebrows. He speaks little, has the air of watching himself, and wishing not to let anything escape from him ; he is very polished, and a little affected. I am very much pleased with the sound of his voice. I took pleasure in contemplating him at close quarters ; I looked at him with astonishment, as at a casket in which there might be millions, and crown diamonds, thinking of all that had come out of this man seated beside me on a low chair, fastening his eyes on his right hand, which has written so many fine things. This, however, was the man who has made my heart beat the most since I was born, and whom perhaps I loved the best of all those that I do not know. The talk was of punishments, vengeance, thieves, etc. etc. The great man and I did the most of the talking. I do not remember whether I said good things or bad ones, but I know I said plenty of them. As you see, I go fairly often to the Pradiers, it is a house that I like very much, where there is no ceremony, and which is altogether in my style.’

Writing to Ernest Chevalier shortly afterwards, he draws the following amusing contrast between the life of the student of the Quartier Latin and that of the dandy on the fashionable south bank of the Seine :—

‘On the other side of the water there are young folks with twelve hundred pounds a year, who have their carriages ; the student goes on foot, or on the top of the omnibus, where his whole body is drenched, if not his feet, when it snows as it did to-day. The young folk over there go every evening to the Opera, to the Italians, they go to evening receptions, they smile at pretty women, who would have us turned out of doors by their hall-porters if we presumed to show ourselves in their houses with our shiny overcoats, our three-year-old costumes, and our elegant spats. Their everyday coats are our holiday and Sunday coats. They go to dine at the Rocher de Cancale and the Café de Paris ; the jolly student feeds himself for thirty half-pence, at Barilhaut ! They make love to marchionesses, or princes’ mistresses ; the poor joker of a student loves shop-girls, who have chilblains on their hands, for the poor devil has his senses like another ; but not too often, like myself, for example, because it costs money ; and when he has paid his tailor, his boot-maker, his landlord, his book-seller, his Law School, his porter, his grocer, his eating-house, he has to buy boots, an overcoat, books, to pay his fees, his wages, buy his tobacco, and he has nothing left, his spirit is broken. Never mind, it is as amusing as anything else to study law at Paris. And as that is entirely my opinion, I am going to bed directly.’

In August 1843 Flaubert presented himself before the examiners, and was rejected. A man, whose memory for the particular line in a page, in which a word occurred that had attracted his notice years before, was almost miraculous ; a man gifted with the true scholar’s memory, and who, in after years, was able by virtue of this gift to achieve work such as only one or two other men have attempted, could not bring to his aid even the mediocre standard of reminiscence necessary to pass an examination in a comparatively

small number of books. He was absolutely paralysed in the presence of his examiners; stumbled, stuttered, gave the wrong answers to the questions, and, in spite of their wish to help him, absolutely collapsed. He returned to Rouen, and the School of Law saw him not again.

## CHAPTER III

### ILLNESS—MAXIME DUCAMP

IN the month of October, at about the time when he should have returned to Paris, Flaubert was seized with an hysterico-epileptic attack. The nature of this disease was even less well understood then, than it is now. Père Flaubert accepted the conclusion, to which other eminent medical authorities had come, that epilepsy was due to a plethora of vitality; and in the case of Gustave, the expansive noisy giant, there was every excuse for believing that this might be the case. He bled, starved, drenched his unfortunate son, with all the more vigour that his pride, both paternal and professional, was wounded by the calamity. In spite of the treatment Flaubert eventually shook off the disease; a journey in Brittany with Maxime Ducamp in 1847 nearly cured him; and another journey in the East with the same friend, 1849-1851, caused a complete suspension. The attacks did not return till the closing years of his life.

Nevertheless the disease, and possibly the erroneous treatment, made a deep mark on the thread of his existence. From this time onwards, as he told George Sand, he 'was afraid of life.' The three years spent under the supervision of a medical attendant or a servant were years of misery to him. He did his best to overcome the depression and the weakness; he experimented on himself in dealing with the



latter, and learned to control it, but the nightmare of the months of uncertainty was always there, and though the violent seizures passed into abeyance, a nervous irritability remained. Intellectually he was not affected by it; epilepsy is not in all its forms a disease of the intellect. The first Cæsar was an epileptic, so was the first Napoleon; there is every reason for believing Socrates to have been epileptic; most of us can reckon among our friends or acquaintance men or women of great personal charm, and brilliant faculties, who are epileptic; for the disease has many manifestations, from an almost unnoticed and unnoticeable momentary suspension of consciousness, to the violent and sometimes protracted convulsions generally associated with the 'falling sickness.' At one time such persons were worshipped as possessing something of a mysterious divinity; without going to this extreme, we may at least avoid the error of confounding one disease with another, and associating epilepsy with a failure of intellect, as Maxime Ducamp has done.

It is time to speak of this friend to whom Flaubert owed so much, and so little. His first meeting with Flaubert has already been described; he at once fell a victim to the fascinations of the glorious giant, and lived in the closest intimacy with him for the remainder of the student days. While he worshipped and admired his friend's superb ability, he to some extent appropriated him, endeavoured to control him, and, with the best intentions in the world, to narrow him down to his own conception of what a literary man should be. All this unconsciously. He was unaware of his own limitations. We are reminded of him in a passage in the *Éducation Sentimentale*, in which Flaubert, speaking of a less agreeable character, observes: 'There are some friends, who are never content unless they are forcing their

friends to do what is displeasing to them.' This apparently was the bias of Maxime Ducamp, and in later years it produced a breach between himself and Flaubert, which was only healed late in the life of the latter. On the other hand, his affection was perfect. On the first opportunity, he gave himself up to attending his friend in his illness; he undertook the responsible and arduous task of travelling with him for three months in Brittany, when his health was by no means re-established; and again gladly accepted the same responsibility, for nearly two years, when the East was the scene of their adventures, and for nine years there was no cloud upon their friendship. An adequate opportunity of discussing his literary standpoint will be found later on.

In June 1844 Flaubert was able to write the following letter to Louis de Cormenin, one of the Paris band:—

'How guilty I must seem to you, my dear Louis! What can you make of a man who is ill half his time, who is so wearied the other half that he has neither the strength nor the intelligence to write even gentle easy things, like the letter that I should like to send you. Do you know weariness? Not that common vulgar boredom which comes from idleness or ill-health, but that modern weariness which gnaws a man's entrails, and turns an intelligent being into a walking shadow, a thinking apparition. Ah! I am sorry for you if that leprosy is known to you. Sometimes the sufferer thinks he is cured, but one fine day he wakes up suffering more than ever. You know those coloured glasses with which the summer-houses of retired hatters are adorned! one sees the country in red, blue, and yellow through them. Weariness is the same. The most beautiful things seen through it take its colour and reflect its sadness. As for me, it is a malady of my youth which comes back on my evil days such as to-day. They can not say of me as of Pantagruel: 'and then he studied an evil half hour, but always had his mind in the kitchen.' It is in something worse that I have my mind: it is in the leeches that they put on me



yesterday and that scratch my ears, it is in the pill that I have just swallowed, and which is still a-sailing in my stomach on the glass of water that followed it.

‘Do you know that we have no cause to be gay? There is Maxime gone; his absence must weigh heavy upon you; as for me, I have my nerves, which leave me little quiet. When shall we all meet again in Paris in good health, and good temper? And yet what a fine thing it would be, a little club of good fellows, all sons of art, living together, and meeting once or twice a week to eat a good mouthful, washed down with good wine, and savouring some succulent poet the while! I have often formed this dream: it is less ambitious than many others, but perhaps will not be realised any the more for that. I have just seen the sea, and have returned to my dull town; that is why I am stupider than ever. The contemplation of beautiful things always makes one sad for a time. One would say that we are made to bear only a certain dose of beauty, a little more fatigues us. That is why mediocre natures prefer the prospect of a river to that of the ocean; and why there are so many people who pronounce Béranger the first French poet. Do not let us, however, confound the yawn of the middle-class man in the presence of Homer with the deep meditation, the intense, almost painful, reverie which comes upon the poet’s heart, when he measures the giants, and says to himself in his abasement: O Altitudo!

‘For this reason I admire Nero: he is the culminating man of the ancient world. Woe be to him who does not shudder in reading Suetonius! I have recently read the life of Heliogabalus in Plutarch. That man has a beauty different from that of Nero. He is more Asiatic, more delirious, more romantic, more abandoned: it is the evening after the day, madness by torchlight, but Nero is calmer, finer, more ancient, more statuesque, in a word: superior. The masses have lost their poetry since Christianity. Don’t speak to me of modern times in the matter of the grandiose. There is not wherewithal to satisfy the imagination of the lowest grade of journalist.

‘I am delighted to see that you join with me in hatred of Saint Beuve and all his shop. I love before everything the nervous, substantial, clear phrase with swelling muscle, gleaming

skin ; I like masculine, not feminine, phrases, like those of Lamartine very often, and, in a still lower degree, those of Villemain. The men that I habitually read, my bedside books, are Montaigne, Rabelais, R  gnier, La Bruy  re and Le Sage. I admit that I adore Voltaire's prose, and that for me his stories have an excellent relish. I read *Candide* twenty times : I translated it into English, and I have read it over again from time to time. Now I am re-reading Tacitus. In a little time, when I am better, I shall take up my Homer and Shakespeare again. Homer and Shakespeare !—everything is there ! the other poets, even the greatest, seem small beside them.'

There are no more letters for nearly a year. Flaubert's melancholy for a time increased ; a boat was bought for him, but he soon ceased to use it, unable to submit himself to the presence of the servant who was ordered to accompany him.

In 1845, Caroline Flaubert married ; Gustave was in very much better health, and the whole family accompanied the young couple on their wedding trip. Lyons, Marseilles, Genoa, Milan, Geneva, were among the places visited. The journey brought small comfort to Gustave ; his father and he were not of the same opinion as to what things were interesting to see, and what was the most interesting way in which to see them. At Nice he forebore to visit the tomb of Desnoyers, because the step would have appeared comic ; he wanted to see Aigues Mortes, and other places, but did not do so, probably for the same reason. At Genoa, in the Palazzo Doria, however, he saw a picture of the Temptation of St. Anthony by Breughel, which suggested the work on that subject foreshadowed in the Temptation of Smar.

## CHAPTER IV

### CROISSET—DEATH—THE MIDDLE-CLASS PERSON

A YEAR before his death, at the beginning of 1845, Père Flaubert bought a house at Croisset, the first village on the right bank of the Seine below Rouen. In this house his son was destined to spend nearly all his life, and to write all his best work. Those who have a taste for visiting Stratford-on-Avon; who gape before beds in which Queen Elizabeth has slept; who do not leave Florence without exploring a 'certain dark narrow street, one of whose houses bears the inscription "*Qui nacque il divino poeta*";' who sentimentally contemplate the towers of Galileo and Roger Bacon; who fall on their knees at the gateway of Rydal Mount, and steep themselves in the silences of Grasmere churchyard out of the season; those persons, in short, who have the passion for shrines, and the instincts of pilgrimage, will be outraged at learning that Croisset is no more, the house has been replaced by a factory, and of all that was associated with the life of Flaubert in that place, nothing remains but a magnificent tulip-tree, which stood in front of his windows. Flaubert himself was a devout worshipper at sacred places: Byron's prison at Chillon, Voltaire's bedroom at Ferney, the birthplace of Victor Hugo at Besançon, Chateaubriand's castle and grave, the bed of Diane de Poitiers, are some of the altars at which he on different occasions paid his vows.

But, after all, the room in which a man was born, died, or even worked, does little to change our conception of him when that conception is based upon an understanding of his mind. Chalfont St. Giles is a pretty place, but when we have seen it, *Paradise Lost* is no less majestic; even if we had the Globe Theatre preserved under a glass case, *Hamlet* would be no more and no less than *Hamlet*. Wordsworth never saw the plain slate grave-stone at Grasmere; and how much of Shakespeare's life remains at Stratford more than in other quiet Midland towns? To see what the poet has seen, to breathe the air that he breathed, to watch the stately ships move on as he saw them move, hear the laughter from the river as he heard it, to note with him the lamps gleaming upon the water and lending a deeper mystery to most mysterious night,—these are profitable experiences, and these may be felt, though a local cataclysm should swallow up Grasmere, with its lake, its church, and its churchyard, and palatial hotels, and though there is nothing left of the house at Croisset.

The move to Croisset took place some time in 1845, and was soon followed by disaster. In January 1846, the generous, capable, hard-headed, loving but unsympathetic father died; and three months later Caroline Flaubert died also, after giving birth to a daughter. Gustave at once wrote to Maxime Ducamp from Rouen, where the family still had a house. Caroline Flaubert had married young Hamard, whom we last saw rotting on the straw of a dungeon.

‘ROUEN, March 1846.

‘Hamard is leaving my room, where he stood sobbing at the corner of the chimney-piece; my mother is a weeping statue. Caroline speaks, smiles, caresses us, says gentle affectionate words to all of us, she loses her memory, everything is confused in her head; she did not know whether it was I or



Achille who had gone to Paris. What gracefulness there is in the sick, and what strange gestures! The child feeds and cries. Achille says nothing, and knows not what to say. What a house! What a hell! And I? My eyes are as dry as marble. It is strange. Expansive, fluid, abundant, overflowing as I feel myself in fictitious sorrow, real griefs stay in my heart, bitter and hard; they crystallise there, as they come. It seems that Misfortune is upon us, and that she will not go, till she has glutted herself. Once again I am to see the black cloth, and hear the sordid sound of the nailed boots of the undertaker's men descending the stairs. I prefer to have no hope; on the contrary to enter in that way into the woe that is impending. Marjolin arrives this evening; what will he do? Farewell. I had a presentiment yesterday, that, when I saw you again, I should not be gay.'

'CROISSET, *March* 1846.

'I did not wish you to come here; I dreaded your tenderness. I have had enough of the sight of Hamard without seeing you. Perhaps you would have been still less calm than ourselves. In a few days I will summon you, and then I count on you.

'It was yesterday at eleven o'clock that we buried her, poor child. They put her wedding dress on her, with bunches of roses, immortelles and violets. I spent the whole night watching her. She was straight, lying on her bed in that room, where you have heard her play. She seemed taller and more beautiful than in life, with that long white veil, which went down to her feet. In the morning, when all was finished, I gave her a last kiss in her coffin. I leaned over it, I placed my head in it, and I felt the lead give beneath my hands. It is I who had the cast taken. I saw the coarse paws of those clowns handle her, and cover her with plaster. I shall have her hand and her face. I shall beg Pradier to make me a bust of her, and I shall put it in my room. I have for myself her large striped wrapper, a lock of her hair, the table and the desk at which she used to write. That is all, all that remains of those we have loved. Hamard would come with us. On arriving in the cemetery, behind whose walls I used to walk in procession with the school, Hamard kneeled on the edge of

the grave, and sent her kisses through his tears. The grave was too narrow, the coffin could not sink in. They shook it, pulled it all ways, took a shovel, crowbars, and in the end a grave-digger stepped on it, on the place where the head was, to force it down. I was standing at the side, my hat in my hand, I threw it away with a cry.

‘I will tell you the rest face to face, for I could not write all that. I was as dry as a tombstone, but in a state of horrible irritation. I wanted to tell you, what I have just written, thinking to please you. You have enough understanding, and you love me well enough to understand that word “please,” which would make a commonplace person laugh. Here we are back at Croisset since Sunday. What a journey! Alone with my mother and the child which cried! The last time that I went from there, it was with you, do you remember? Of the four, who used to live there two remain. The trees have no leaves yet, the wind whistles, the river is flowing full, the rooms are cold and unfurnished. My mother is better than she might be. She occupies herself with her daughter’s child, puts it to sleep in her own room, rocks it, tends it, as well as she can. She tries to make herself a mother again; will she succeed? The reaction has not yet come, and I fear it terribly. I am overwhelmed, stupefied; I might well need to resume my art life, calm and full of long meditation. I laugh for pity at the vanity of the human will, when I think that it is now six years since I have been wanting to take up my Greek again, and that circumstances are such, that I have not yet reached the verbs. Farewell, dear Max, I embrace you tenderly.’

A month later he again wrote to Maxime Ducamp. The allusion to *Novembre* is to a romance which he had written early in the Paris days, and had read to Ducamp; he destroyed the manuscript along with others in 1870, but a fragment survived, and is published in the volume entitled *Par les champs et par les grèves*. A wild bit of work in his lyrical vein.

‘April 1846.

‘I have taken a large sheet of paper with the intention of



writing you a long letter ; perhaps I shall only send you three lines ; that is as things will turn out. The sky is grey, the Seine is yellow, the turf is green, the trees have hardly any leaves, they are beginning, it is the Spring, the season of joy and love. "But there is no more spring-time in my heart than on the high road where the bright sun wearies the eyes, where the dust rises in clouds." Do you remember where that comes? It is in *Novembre*. I was nineteen years old when I wrote that, six years ago soon. It is strange with how little faith in happiness I was born.

'I had a complete presentiment of life in my earliest days. It was like a sickly smell of cooking escaping through a ventilator. One has no need to have eaten to know that it will make one sick. I do not complain of that, however ; my last misfortunes have saddened me, but have not surprised me. Without in the least doing away with the sensation, I have analysed them like an artist. This occupation has in its melancholy fashion refreshed my sorrow. If I had expected better things of life, I should have cursed it ; I have not done that. You would perhaps consider me a heartless man, if I were to tell you, that I do not consider the present condition the most pitiful of all. When I had nothing to complain of, I thought myself still more to be pitied. After all, that has perhaps to do with practice. By dint of expanding itself to suffering, the soul attains to a prodigious capacity for it ; what once filled it to the point of bursting, now barely covers the bottom of the vessel. I have at least one infinite consolation, a foundation on which I rest ; it is this : I do not see that anything further can happen to me in the way of troubles. There is the death of my mother, which I foresee more or less distant ; but with less selfishness, I ought to summon it for her. Is there any humanity in helping the hopeless? Have you reflected how we are created for sorrow? Men faint in voluptuous orgies, never in grief ; tears are to the heart what water is to the fishes. I am resigned to everything, ready for anything ; I have reefed my sails, and wait for the squall, my back to the wind, and my head on my breast. It is said that religious people endure the troubles of this world better than ourselves ; but the man who is convinced of the great harmony, who hopes for the annihilation

of his body at the same time that his soul perhaps will return to sleep in the bosom of the great whole, to animate maybe the bodies of panthers, or to glitter in the stars, he is no more tormented. The happiness of the mystics has been too much cried up. Cleopatra died as calmly as Saint Francis. I believe that the dogma of a future life was invented by the fear of Death, or the longing to snatch something from him.

‘Yesterday my niece was baptised. The child, the bystanders, myself, the priest himself, who had just dined, and was all red-faced, did not understand, any of us, what we were doing. Contemplating all these symbols, meaningless for us, I had the feeling of being present at some ceremony of an old world religion dug up out of its dust. It was very simple, and very familiar, and yet I could not get over my amazement. The priest muttered at a gallop Latin, which he did not understand; we others did not listen; the child held its little bare head under the water, which was poured on it, the taper burned, and the verger responded: Amen! For certain the most intelligent thing there was the stones, which had formerly understood all that, and which perhaps had retained something.

‘I am going to set myself to work at last—at last! I have a longing, I have a hope to fag away immeasurably and for long. Have we laid our finger upon the emptiness of ourselves, of our plans, of our happiness, of beauty, goodness, everything? I certainly appear to myself very limited, very mediocre. I am acquiring an artistic niceness, which makes me desperate; I shall end with never writing another line. I think I might do something good, but I always ask myself to what purpose? It is the more odd, because I do not feel myself discouraged; on the contrary, I enter more than ever into the pure idea, the infinite. I breathe there, it attracts me, I become a Brahmin, or rather I am going a bit mad. I have a strong suspicion that I shall not compose anything this summer. If there were anything it would be drama; my oriental story is put off to next year, perhaps to the following, perhaps for ever. If my mother dies, my plans are made; I sell everything and I go to live at Rome, Syracuse, Naples. Will you follow me? A little calm, great God! a little rest; nothing but that. I do not ask for

happiness. You seem to me happy, that is sad. Happiness is a purple mantle with a ragged lining ; when one wants to cover one's self with it, everything flies to the wind, and one remains frozen stiff in those chilly rags one had thought so warm.'

The letters to Alfred le Poittevin bear a different stamp from those written to other friends. The man himself was something entirely out of the common mould. He died young, having brought no work to light by which he can be judged. As a rule extremely reserved, with Flaubert he expanded ; together they had travelled in the realm of metaphysics, they had studied not merely the rules of thought, and the machinery with which thought should be expressed, they had tried to discover the meaning of the systems in which human thought, relative to the unseen, has from time to time expressed itself. Alfred le Poittevin used to call himself intellectually a Greek of the Lower Empire. Flaubert's distinctive work, the historical analysis of the human mind, which, in two different regions, is the subject of the *St. Anthony*, and of *Bouvard et Pécuchet*, was the outcome of his communion with Alfred le Poittevin. The sound human affection of Maxime Ducamp counted for much in his life ; for still more, the sympathy with Louis Bouilhet in the matter of literary form, and in appreciation of the sacredness of letters ; but the sympathy of Alfred le Poittevin touched spheres to which neither of these had access. There are not many letters addressed to him, for the reason that he lived close to Rouen, and that the friends often met.

It is in a letter to him that is first revealed in all its intensity Flaubert's disgust at the commonplace, the middle-class life, with its material preoccupations, its inept ejaculations, its self-complacency, smug vices, noisy rant.

‘There is now so great an interval between me and the rest of the world that I am sometimes amazed to hear the most natural, the most simple things. The commonest expression sometimes holds me in singular admiration. There are actions, voices, that I cannot get over, and inanities which almost make me reel. Have you ever listened attentively to people who were speaking in a language that you did not understand? I am at that stage. By dint of wishing to understand everything, everything makes me think. It seems to me, however, that this condition of amazement is not stupidity. The middle-class man, for example, is to me something unlimited. You can’t imagine what a treat the “frightful” disaster of Monville has caused me; to make a thing interesting, it is enough to contemplate it for a long time.’

The disaster of Monville near Rouen is often alluded to in the correspondence. A destructive water-spout broke over the place. Among the notes for the continuation of *Bouvard et Pécuchet* is the following excerpt from Raspail: ‘The potato disease was caused by the disaster of Monville. The meteor acted more in the valleys, it withdrew the caloric. It is the result of a sudden chill.’

Alfred le Poittevin married in 1846 a Mlle. de Maupas-sant, and the young couple moved from Rouen. Flaubert felt this to be a double desertion; and it is in this spirit that he writes of the event to Ernest Chevalier, who himself was living in Corsica. The letter concludes:—

‘My poor mother is always mourning—you have no idea of a grief like hers. If there is a God, one must admit that He is not always in a fit of good-humour. My courage sometimes fails to bear all alone the burden of this great despair that nothing lightens.’

But he nobly went through with his task notwithstanding. Ducamp writes of him many years later:—

‘Gustave adored his mother, never left her, lived with her and for her. What he had considered a duty after the death of



his father had become a necessity of his nature ; he felt uneasy, almost unhappy away from her ; I alone know the sacrifices that he made to her, and which he never regretted. This impetuous, imperious giant, flying out at the least contradiction, was the most respectful son, the gentlest, the most attentive that a mother could dream of.'

## CHAPTER V

LOVE—LOUIS BOUILHET—PARODY

FLAUBERT spent some weeks of the summer of 1846 in Paris, and in the last days of July met a lady in Pradier's studio with whom he corresponded for eight years; the correspondence was to some extent interrupted during his travels in Brittany in 1847, and his Eastern journey, 1849-51. The lady in question was well known in Parisian literary circles; she kept a *salon* where artists and Bohemians met. She was an intimate friend of Victor Hugo, Victor Cousin, and others. She died in 1875, before Flaubert; and her friends, fortunately for us, restored the letters to his family. She was a married woman living apart from her husband, who died in 1851.

There are allusions in these letters to a previous love affair. When Flaubert was fourteen he saw at Trouville, and forthwith adored, a lady who appears as Mme. Arnoux in the *Éducation Sentimentale*; this calf-love made a great impression upon him, the more so perhaps that he never revealed it to the object of his affections, though they became friends. It is in these two instances only, that his equilibrium was seriously disturbed by the passion of love.

‘August 4, 1846. Tuesday, midnight.

‘Twelve hours ago we were still together! How distant that is! At present the night is warm and balmy; I hear the great



tulip-tree under my window rustle in the wind, and when I lift my head I see the moon reflected in the river. I have just arranged all alone, and carefully put away, everything that you gave me; your two letters are in the embroidered satchel; I am going to read them again, when I have sealed mine. I did not like to take my ordinary note-paper to write to you; it is edged with black; let nothing sad ever pass from me to you!

‘I would like to talk to you of nothing but joy, and surround you with a calm continuous happiness to pay you a little for all that you have given me open-handed in the generosity of your love. I am afraid of being cold, dry, selfish, and yet, God knows, what is going on in me at this moment! What a recollection! What a longing! Ah! those two good drives of ours! How beautiful they were! The second one especially with the lightning! I recall the colour of the trees lighted by the lamps, and the swinging of the springs: we were alone, happy. I gazed at your head in the night, I saw it in spite of the darkness, your eyes lighted up your whole face. . . .

‘It seems to me that I am writing badly, you will read all this coldly; I don’t say anything that I want to say. My phrases tread on one another like sighs: to understand them you must fill up what separates one from another; you will do that, will you not? My mother was waiting for me at the station; she wept on seeing me arrive; you wept on seeing me depart. Our fate is then such that we cannot move ourselves from one place to another without costing tears at either side. That is sombrely grotesque. I find here again the green lawns, the big trees, and the water flowing, as when I went away. My books are open in the same place; nothing has changed. External nature shames us, she has a calm humiliating to our pride. Never mind, do not let us think of the future, nor of ourselves, nor of anything! To think is the way to suffer. Let us allow our hearts to go before the wind, as long as it will fill the sail! Let it carry us, as it pleases, and as for the cliffs—on my word—so much the worse! We shall see. Farewell. Farewell.’

‘August 7, 1846.

‘Since we have told one another that we love, you ask me whence comes my reservation, that I do not add, “for ever.”

Why? The reason is that I divine the future; that the antithesis continually rises before my eyes. I have never seen a child without thinking that he will become an old man, nor a cradle without thinking of a grave. The contemplation of a woman makes me dream of her skeleton. That is why merry sights make me sad, and mournful spectacles affect me little. I weep too much inwardly to shed tears outwardly; a story read moves me more than a real misfortune. When I had a family, I often wished not to have one, to be freer, to go and live in China, or with savages. Now that I have none, I miss it, and cling on to the walls, where its shadow still remains. Other men would be proud of the love which you lavish upon me, their vanity would drink there at its ease, and their male self-esteem would be flattered by it to its most intimate folds; but it only makes my heart faint with sadness, when the moments of excitement are passed; for I say to myself: "she loves me, and I who love her too, do not love her enough. If she had never known me, I should have spared her all the tears that she sheds."

'You think that you will always love me, child! always! What presumption in a human mouth! You have loved before now, have you not? as I have; do you remember that then too you said "for ever"?'

'But I am tormenting you, vexing you. . . . Never mind, I prefer to disturb your happiness now rather than to exaggerate it coldly, as they all do, so that its loss hereafter may make you suffer more. . . . Who knows? Perhaps you will thank me later for having had the courage not to be more tender. Ah! if I had lived at Paris, if all the days of my life could have been passed with you! yes, I would let myself go with the stream without crying for help. I should have found in you a daily satisfaction for my heart and head, that would never have wearied me. But separated, destined to see one another but rarely, it is frightful, what a perspective! and yet what is to be done? I cannot conceive how I managed to leave you. That is just me, that is! That is just my pitiful nature; were you not to love me, I should die of it; you do love me, and I am for writing to you to stop. I would have liked to pass into your life like a fresh stream, which would have cooled the thirsty

banks, and not like a ravaging torrent; the memory of me should have made your flesh quiver, and your heart smile. Do not ever curse me! There—I shall have loved you very much before I cease to love you. For my part—I shall always bless you; your image will remain for me suffused with poetry and tenderness, as was last night's sky in the milky vapours of its silvery mist. This month I will come to see you, I will be with you one big whole day. I owe you a frank explanation about myself to reply to a page of your letter, which shows me the illusions that you have with regard to me. It would be cowardly of me to let them last longer, and cowardice is a vice which disgusts me under whatever aspect it appears.

‘Whatever they say, the bottom of my nature is the mountebank. In my childhood and in my youth I had a mad love of the boards. I should perhaps have been a great actor if Heaven had willed me to be born poorer. And now what I like above everything is form, provided that it be beautiful and nothing more. Women, whose hearts are too ardent and minds too narrow, do not understand this religion of beauty, this abstraction of sentiment. They must always have a cause, an end. I, for my part, admire tinsel as much as gold. The poetry of the tinsel is even superior, in that it is sad. For me there is nothing in the world except beautiful verses, well turned, harmonious, resonant phrases, glorious sunsets, moonlight, coloured paintings, antique marbles, and shapely heads. Beyond that, nothing. I would sooner have been Talma than Mirabeau, because he lived in a sphere of purer beauty. Caged birds stir my compassion as much as enslaved peoples. In all politics there is only one thing that I understand, revolt. Fatalist as a Turk, I believe that all that we may do for the progress of humanity, or anything else, comes to absolutely the same thing. As for this “progress,” my understanding is a bit obtuse for things that are not quite clear. All that has to do with that way of talking fatigues me immeasurably. I hate the modern tyranny, because it seems to me stupid, feeble, and timid in itself, but I have a deep admiration for the ancient tyranny, which I regard as the finest manifestation of man. I am before everything the man of fancy, caprice, inconsequence. Some day I shall live far from here, and more will be heard of me. As for what

ordinarily touches men the most nearly in the matter of physical love, I have always separated it from the other. I saw you laugh at that the other day in relation to B. . . . that was my own story. You are certainly the only woman that I have loved.

‘I loved one from the age of fourteen to twenty without telling her, without touching her; and I was nearly three years after that without being aware of my sex. At one time I thought I should die, so I thanked Heaven for it. You are the only woman that I have ventured to wish to please, and perhaps the only one that I have pleased. Thank you, thank you. But will you understand me to the end, will you bear the weight of my weariness, my whims, my caprices, my despairs, and my violent reactions? You tell me, for example, to write to you every day, and if I do not you will scold me. Well—the idea that you expect a letter every morning will prevent me from writing it. Let me love you after my own fashion, in the manner of my being, with what you call my originality. Force me to nothing, and I will do everything. Understand me and don’t accuse me. If I judged you to be frivolous and silly like other women I would pay you with words, promises, oaths. What would that cost me? But I prefer to remain below, rather than above my heart’s truth.

‘The Numidians, Herodotus says, have a strange custom. They burn the skin of their heads with coal when they are quite small, so that they may afterwards be less sensitive to the action of the sun, which is devouring in their country. So of all people in the world it is they who are the healthiest. Think that I have been brought up in Numidia. Would it not have been poor sport to have said to them, “You feel nothing, the sun itself does not warm you!” Oh, do not be afraid! there may be a hard skin somewhere on my heart, but it is none the less good.’

Though these letters are given in the order in which they were written, all are not given; only those in which a new string seems to be touched, and which therefore throw additional light on Flaubert’s character; or those which are in themselves intrinsically beautiful.



*' August 12, 1846.*

' You would inspire a dead man with love. How then do you wish me not to love you? You have a power of attraction to make the stones stand up at your voice. Your letters move me to my inmost parts. Fear not then, that I shall forget you. You know well that natures like yours are not left, those emotional, moving, deep natures. I am angry with myself, I could beat myself for having caused you pain. Forget everything that I said in Sunday's letter. I had addressed myself to your male intelligence, I believed that you would know how to abstract yourself from yourself, and understand me in your heart. You have seen too many things, where there was not so much; you have exaggerated all that I said to you. Perhaps you believed that I was posing, that I was giving myself out for the Anthony of a small theatre. You treat me as a Voltairian, and materialist. God knows, however, if I am. You also speak to me of my exclusive tastes in literature, which ought to have made you divine what I am in love. I am searching in vain for what all that means. I don't understand a word of it. On the contrary I admire everything in my heart's good faith; and if I am worth anything at all, it is in virtue of this pantheistic faculty, and also of that harshness which has wounded you. Come, don't let us talk any more of it. I was wrong, I was a fool. I did with you what I have done at other times with my best loved ones, I showed them the bottom of my bag, and the bitter dust which flew out of it, made them choke. How many times without meaning it have I not made my father weep! He so intelligent, so acute! But he understood nothing of my way of speech. He like you, like the others. I have the infirmity of having been born with a special language to which I alone have the key. I am not unhappy at all, I am not surfeited with anything, everybody thinks me of a very gay character, and never in my life do I complain. At the bottom I do not think myself much to be pitied, for I envy nothing, and I want nothing. There—I will not torment you any more, I will touch you gently, like a child that one is afraid of wounding, I will draw back into myself the prickles which come out of me. With just a little goodwill even the porcupine does not always hurt. You say that I



analyse too much, I think that I do not know myself enough ; every day I discover something new in me. I travel in myself as in an unknown country, although I have traversed it a hundred times. You are not grateful to me for my frankness (women want to be deceived, they force you to it, and if you resist, they blame you). You tell me that I did not show myself like that at first : on the contrary, recall your recollections. I began by showing you my wounds. Recall all that I said to you at our first dinner ; why you cried out yourself : "So you excuse everything ! There is no longer either good or evil for you." No, I have never lied to you, I loved you instinctively, and I did not deliberately make up my mind to try and please you. That all happened because it had to happen. Laugh at my fatalism, add that I am something late in being a Turk. Fatalism is the Providence of evil, it is the Providence that we see, I believe.

'The tears that I find on your letters, those tears caused by me, I would like to buy them back again by so many drops of blood. I am furious with myself, it increases my disgust for myself. Were it not for the idea that I please you I should hold myself in horror. For the rest, it is always so ; we make those whom we love suffer, or they make us suffer. How is it that you reproach me with this phrase : "I would wish never to have known you !" I know of nothing more tender. Would you like me to supply the parallel to that ? It is the phrase that I uttered on the eve of my sister's death, uttered like a cry, and which revolted everybody. There was a talk of my mother. "If she could only die !" As it appears, that sort of thing is not fashionable, and seems either odd or cruel ; what the devil is one to say when one's heart is full to bursting ?

'Ask yourself whether there are many men who would have written you that letter which hurt you so much. Few, I think, would have adopted that style, that complete self-abnegation. Please tear up that letter, my love, don't think any more of it, or read it over again from time to time, when you feel yourself strong. Come—laugh ! To-day I am merry, I don't know why, the sweetness of your letters of this morning passes into my blood. But don't spin me any more commonplaces such as this : that it is money that has prevented me from being happy ; that

if I had worked I should have been better off; as if to be an apothecary's apprentice, baker, or wine-merchant were enough to prevent one being bored in this world! That has all been said to me too often by a crowd of commonplace people for me to wish to hear it in your mouth, it spoils it; your mouth was not made for that. But I thank you for approving of my literary silence. If I have anything new to say, when the time comes it will be said of itself. Oh! how I should like to write great works to please you, how I should like to see you quiver at my style, I who have no desire for fame (and more sincerely than the fox in the fable); I would like to have it for you, to throw it to you like a bouquet, that it might be a caress the more, and a soft bed in which your mind might spread itself when it thought of me. You say I am handsome; I would like to be handsome, to have black curls falling over my ivory shoulders like the Greek youths; I would like to be strong, pure; but I look at myself in the glass, and think that you love me, and discover myself to be revoltingly commonplace.

'I have hard hands, bowed knees, and a narrow chest. If I had only had a voice, if I knew how to sing, I would modulate those long aspirations, which now have to pass away in sighs! If you had known me ten years ago, I was fresh, perfumed, breathing life and love; but now I see my maturity bordering on decay.

'I regret all my past, it seems to me that I should have kept it in reserve, in an attitude of waiting, to give it to you when the time came. But I never suspected that any one could love me, it still seems to me something outside nature—Love for me! How comic it is! and, like a spendthrift who wants to ruin himself in a day, I have given all my riches, small and great.'

From the next letter we see that the lady had begun to send verses; she was by way of being a poetess, and the curious may still discover her published works. To the lover these verses naturally appeared full of every charm. They were accompanied by a portrait of the lady herself, a proof of an engraving which was published in some Parisian book of beauty; and with all Flaubert's aversion to falsehood and

hypocrisy, he found it necessary to invent a half truth to account to his mother for his possession of the portrait, which the good mother indeed judged to be pretty, representing a countenance animated, open, and good.

The letter concludes :—

‘ I read this morning some verses from your volume with a friend who came to see me. He is a poor fellow who gives lessons here to earn his bread, and who is a poet, a real poet, who does splendid, charming work, and who will remain unknown because he is in want of two things; bread and leisure. Yes, we read you, we admired you.’

The poet in question was Louis Bouilhet, who lived with Flaubert in the closest friendship till his death in 1867; the nature of this friendship may be felt through the following passage which concludes Flaubert’s preface to a posthumous volume of his friend’s poems :—

‘ And since to everything a moral is demanded, here is mine : Are there anywhere two young fellows who spend their Sundays reading the poets together, telling one another what they have done, the plans of the works they would wish to write, the similes that have occurred to them, a phrase, a word ;—and who, though despising all besides, conceal this passion with a virgin’s modesty, I give them this advice :—

‘ Go side by side in the woods declaiming verses, mingling your soul with the sap of the trees, and the eternity of masterpieces, lose yourselves in historic dreams, in consternation in the presence of the sublime ! spend your youth in the arms of the Muse ! Her love consoles for the loss of other loves, and replaces them.

‘ At last, if the incidents of life when once perceived, seem to you transposed, as if for the purpose of an illusion to be described, so that all things, your own existence included, shall seem to you to have no other utility, if you are resolved to face any outrage, ready for any sacrifice, armed against every trial, launch yourselves, publish !

‘Then, whatever may happen, you will see the pitifulness of your rivals without indignation, and their fame without envy; for the less favoured will console himself by the success of the more fortunate; the one whose nerves are strong will support the comrade who loses heart, each will bring to the common stock his particular acquisitions; and this reciprocal control will prevent pride, and defer decadence.

‘Then when one has died—for the life was too beautiful—let the other preserve his memory as a precious possession to make him a bulwark against baseness, a resource in weakness, or rather as a domestic oratory, to which he will repair to murmur his sorrows and empty his heart. How many times in the night will he, casting his eyes into the darkness behind that lamp, which used to shine on the two heads, vaguely seek for a shadow, ready to ask it: “Is it so? What am I to do? Tell me”—and if this memory is the everlasting food of his despair, it will at least be a companion in his solitude.’

Louis Bouilhet we have already seen with Ernest Chevalier, a school friend of Flaubert. He was born at Cany, a small village outside Rouen; his father had been a military surgeon; his maternal grandfather, an active-minded man, who corresponded with Voltaire, Turgot, Condorcet, lived to be nearly a hundred. Bouilhet was a year younger than Flaubert, and unlike Flaubert carried off all the prizes at school, ‘although the very reverse of what is called “a good boy,”—the term applied to mediocre natures, and to a moderation of character, which was rare at that time.’

Among the little group of lads before mentioned, whose exalted imaginations led them to strange excesses, Bouilhet was the elegiac poet, the singer of ruins and moonlights. This phase was succeeded by a republican fervour; in his twentieth year he all but joined a secret society. After taking his degree he had to decide upon a profession, and selected that of medicine. He became a resident student, assistant house-surgeon, with the elder Flaubert. He had



inherited a small income from a godfather ; this he generously handed over to his mother and two sisters, and supported himself by giving private lessons to young persons who experienced a difficulty in passing examinations. As this coaching work occupied the greater part of his days, night duty at the infirmary fell to him more often than to any other student. Many of his best early verses were written in the wards of the hospital ; indeed he would write verses anywhere, and was never without a note-book in which the inspiration of the moment could be jotted down. Like his friend, he was physically a fine man,—elegantly built, tall, robust, with a flood of golden curls. In 1846, on the death of Père Flaubert he definitely abandoned medicine, and took exclusively to ‘making bachelors of arts.’ After 1848 his faith in republicanism and interest in politics vanished. It was in May 1846 that his closer intimacy with Flaubert began ; he used to arrive at Croisset on Saturday evening or Sunday, and stay till Monday morning. ‘Part of the night was spent in reading over the week’s work. What hours of expansion ! Endless cries, exclamations, arguments for or against the retention of an epithet, reciprocal enthusiasm.’ Bouilhet was a superb Latinist, and familiar with all classical literature, Greek no less than Latin. Though extremely shy, blushing under a look, uncomfortable in a drawing-room, he understood no nonsense when a literary question arose ; he supported his convictions with energy and wit, and had a formidable power of sarcasm.

At this time Flaubert was amusing himself with a careful study of the tragedies of Voltaire and Marmontel. Maxime Ducamp asks—to what purpose ? One outcome of the study was a parody,—‘a tragedy according to the rules, with the three unities, and wherein nothing would ever be called by its right name.’ Flaubert, Bouilhet, Ducamp spent hours



together over this burlesque, which was never published, nor indeed finished. A few verses however have been preserved. The plot and subject came from Flaubert, but none of the verses ; he never wrote a verse in his life that would scan, or a couplet that would rhyme.

The subject of the tragedy was ‘Jenner, or the Discovery of Vaccine.’ The action took place in the palace of Gonnor, prince of the Angles ; the stage represented a colonnade ornamented with the spoils of the conquered Caledonians. A sawbones, pupil of Jenner, and jealous of his master, played the principal part in the piece. Materialist and atheistic, fed on the doctrines of Holbach, Helvetius, and Lamettrie, he foresees the French Revolution, and predicts the accession of Louis Philippe. The other heroes were outlined on those of Marmontel’s tragedies. The small-pox, personified as a monster, appears in a dream to the young princess, the daughter of the virtuous Gonnor. A sentinel is suddenly seized by the unknown malady ; which Jenner, ‘eldest son of Æsculapius,’ is to succeed in curing ; the patient writhes with pain, for

‘The flowers of high Ætna, the snows of the Alps  
Contend for his senses.’

An attendant maiden offers him a glass of sweetened water with a little orange-flower :—

‘This juice so delicious expressed from the cane  
Which is melted in water, and sent us from Spain,  
Thus mingled with perfumes brought hither in ships  
From the far western islands may moisten your lips.’

The remedy fails ; the sentinel still raves ; they then propose to go and fetch him the instrument with which Molière pursued M. de Pourceaugnac, and which, in the lips of the young Caledonian maid, becomes :—

‘The tortuous tube from whence health gushes forth.’

In another place Jenner's official hat is described as

‘ The majestic head-piece  
That ornament stately whose mother is Greece.’

While a woman, whose face was so pitted with small-pox as to resemble a skimmer, is thus nobly delineated :—

‘ I have seen a maiden whose gentle aspect  
Caused my horrified eyes on the spot to detect  
A resemblance to that thousand-piercèd machine,  
Armed with which the good matron may often be seen,  
To remove from the brim of her vessels of clay  
The foam of the juices those vessels convey.’

In such pleasant fooling as this Flaubert and Bouilhet settled slowly down to their lifelong work ; the one began the first edition of Saint Anthony, the other a poem with a Roman subject, Melænis.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE PATH OF LOVE NOT SMOOTH—LETTER TO MRS. TENNANT

MEANWHILE, the correspondence with the Parisian poetess continued ; it had lasted little more than a fortnight, when ‘the cliffs’ appeared on the horizon. The lady began to urge her admirer to come to Paris, to live there permanently with her ; she was not altogether satisfied with his absorbing admiration of the beautiful in art ; nor could she understand why, loving her so much, he should still remain in attendance on his mother.

‘You are always speaking to me of your sorrows ; I believe in them, I have seen the proof of it, I feel it in myself, which is better. But I see another sorrow, a sorrow which is there by my side, and which never complains ;—which even smiles, and in comparison with which, yours, immense though it may be, will never be more than a rash compared to a burn, a convulsion beside an agony. There is the vice in which I am caught. The two women, that I love best, have passed a bit with two reins into my heart, by which they hold me, pull me alternately by love and pain.’

A recommendation to read the morning papers met with no very encouraging response :—

‘I don’t care about news ; politics bore me, I loathe periodicals ; the whole business makes me dull or furious. You speak to me of an earthquake at Leghorn. Even if I were to open my mouth over that and emit the phrases of consecrated usage

under such circumstances : " It is very tiresome ! " " What a frightful disaster ! " " Is it possible ? " " Oh, good God ! " will that restore life to the dead, wealth to the poor ? In all that there is a hidden meaning that escapes us, which we do not understand, and doubtless a superior utility, as in the wind and rain ; because our melon frames have been broken by the hail, must we wish to suppress hurricanes ? Who knows but what the wind that brings down a roof, opens up a whole forest ? Why should not the volcano which destroys a town fertilise a province ?

' I regret that Phidias (Pradier) is not coming. He is an excellent fellow and a great artist ; yes, a great artist, a real Greek, and the most ancient of all the moderns, a man who does not concern himself with anything, neither with politics, nor socialism, nor Fourier, nor the Jesuits, nor the University, who is there like a good workman with his sleeves tucked up doing his business from morning till evening, with the wish to do it well, and the love of his art. Everything is there, in the love of art. But I stop,—that irritates you again : you do not like to hear me say that I concern myself more about a verse than a man, and that I am more grateful to the poets than to the saints and heroes.'

Within a month jealousy had declared itself ; the object, a model of Pradier's ; and then there was always the standing jealousy of the lady of Trouville. Under the circumstances the following confidence was scarcely discreet :—

' You make a very true remark ; love is a great comedy, and life also, when one does not take a part in it ; only I do not admit that it is laughable. Nearly eighteen months ago I made this experience in a living subject, that is to say that the experience was there ready made. I used to visit a house where there was a daughter, charming, wonderfully beautiful, of a beauty altogether Christian and almost Gothic, if I may say so ; she had a simple mind inclined to devotion, she wept and laughed turn in and turn out, as rain succeeds sunshine and sunshine rain ; I moved this beautiful heart with my words at my pleasure, the heart in which there was nothing that was not



pure. I see her still reclining on her rose pillow and looking at me, as I read, with her wide blue eyes. One day we were alone, sitting on a sofa, she took my hand, passed her fingers into mine ; I let her do it without thinking of anything at all ; for I am very innocent at most times, and she looked at me with a look which still makes me shudder.

‘ Her mother came in just then, she understood it all and smiled. I am sure that the poor little thing had given way to a moment of irresistible tenderness, one of those swoons of the soul in which it seems that everything in you melts and dissolves—a voluptuous pain, which would be full of rapture were one not ready to burst into sobs or melt into tears. You cannot imagine the impression of terror that I felt ; I went back home quite upset, and reproaching myself for living ; I do not know if I exaggerated the thing to myself, but I, who did not love her, I would have given my life to redeem that sad look of love to which mine did not respond.’

After this, one is not surprised that the next letter begins with reproaching a temporary lull of four days in the correspondence. It continues :—

‘ You would like me to know Béranger ; so I should. His is a great nature which touches me. But in speaking of his works there is one great misfortune, and that is the class of his admirers. There are enormous geniuses who have only one defect, one vice, that is of being felt above all by vulgar minds, hearts open to light poetry. For three years Béranger has been solacing the loves of students, and the sensual dreams of bagmen. I know that he does not write for them, but these are the people who feel him above all others ; and it is all very well talking, but the popularity which seems to expand his genius, vulgarises it, because the really beautiful is not for the masses, above all in France. . . . For my own special consumption those that I like the best, are the geniuses a little less agreeable to handle, more contemptuous of the people, more retired, more haughty in their ways and tastes ; or perhaps the only man who can replace them all—my old friend Shakespeare, upon whom I am going to start again from



one end to the other, and not to leave him this time till I have his pages at my fingers' ends. When I read Shakespeare, I become greater, more intelligent, purer. Arrived at the summit of one of his works I seem to be on a high mountain, everything disappears, and everything appears, one ceases to be a man, one becomes an *eye*, new horizons rise, the perspective is prolonged to infinity, one does not think that one has lived thus in those cabins, that are hardly distinguishable, that one has drunk at all those rivers, which look smaller than brooks, in a word that one has moved in that ant-hill and made part of it. I once wrote in a moment of happy pride, which I should be very glad to recover again, a phrase that you will understand. It was of the joy caused by reading great poets. It seemed to me at times that the enthusiasm they caused me made me their equal, and lifted me to their level! Come, you are still vexed about what I said to you on the subject of the St. Sylvestre. I said that just simply to divert you. I have very little perspicacity in relation to you, as it appears. My science collapses before women, it is true that they are a chapter in which the next line always proves to you, that you understood nothing whatever of the preceding one.'

Through a cousin, the adored one discovered the place of residence of the Trouville lady, somewhere in America, and Flaubert proposed to make use of this channel to transmit a letter to the ancient object of his affections, which was first to be read by the present divinity. In the letter in which this proposal was made, the following sentence occurs :—

'No, I would like to make of you something quite apart, neither friend nor mistress, that is too restricted, too exclusive, one does not love one's friend enough, with one's mistress one is too silly. It is the middle term that I seek, the essence of these two mingled sentiments.'

In spite of this flattering statement the suggestion proved not altogether acceptable, and the reply to it elicited the following response :—

*Wednesday, 9 P.M. October 1, 1846.*

“Frankly, speak to me frankly.” That is your expression ; and at the same time you say you want me to spare you, you accuse me of being brutal, and you do everything you can to make me more so. For a man of common sense it is at once a strange and curious thing the art that women exert to force you to deceive them, they make you hypocritical in spite of yourself, and then they accuse you of having told lies, of having betrayed them. Ah well ! no, my poor darling, I will not be more explicit than I have been, because it seems to me that I cannot be. I have always told you all the truth and nothing but the truth.

‘If I cannot come to Paris as you wish, the reason is that I must stay here. My mother needs me, the least absence makes her uneasy, her grief imposes a thousand unimaginable tyrannies upon me ; what would be nothing for others is for me much. I cannot send people marching who entreat me with sad faces and tears in their eyes. I am as feeble as a child, and I give way because I do not like reproaches, entreaties, sighs.

‘Last year, for example, I went sailing in a boat every day, I ran no risk in it, because, apart from my good seamanship, I am an unusually strong swimmer ; well, this year she took it into her head to be anxious ; she did not ask me not to betake myself any more to this exercise, which is for me, especially at the time of high tides as now, full of charm : I cut the wave which wets me as it falls back on the flanks of my bark, I let go my sail, which shivers and flaps with joyous movement, I am alone, without speaking, without thinking, given up to the furies of nature, and rejoicing in feeling myself at her mercy ; well, she said nothing to me on the subject, but none the less I have put the whole apparatus away in the attic, and there is not a day on which I do not wish to take it out again ; I do nothing of the kind ; to avoid certain allusions, certain looks, that is all. In the same way for ten years I concealed the fact of my writing, in order to spare myself a possible raillery.

‘I should want an excuse to go to Paris—what excuse ? On the following journey another, and so on. Having nothing but

myself that attaches her to life my mother is all day after worrying her head about the possible misfortunes and accidents that may happen to me. When I want anything, I do not ring, because if that happens, I hear her running all breathless up the stairs to come and see if I am not ill ; and so I am obliged to go down myself, and look for wood, when mine is out, for my tobacco when I want to smoke, my candles, when my own are used up. Yet again, my poor soul, I assure you, that if I could, not go to Paris, but live there with you, or at any rate near you, I would do so. But . . . alas ! . . . alas !

‘I remember that about ten years ago one holidays we were at Havre, my father heard there, that a woman whom he had known in his youth, when seventeen years old, was living there with her son, then an actor in the theatre at that town ; he took it into his head to go and see her again. This woman, a celebrated beauty in her native place, had formerly been his mistress ; he did not do as many middle class people would have done, he did not conceal the fact, he was too lofty for that ; he went then to pay her a visit, my mother and we three remained on foot in the street waiting for him—the visit lasted nearly an hour. Do you think that my mother was jealous, or that she felt the smallest annoyance on the subject ? Not a bit of it, and yet she loved him, loved him as much as a woman ever has been able to love a man, and that, not only when they were young, but to the very last day after a union of thirty-five years. Why do you wound yourself in anticipation about a word of remembrance that I intend to send to Madame X ? I do more than my father, for I make you a third in our conversation,—which takes place across the Atlantic.

‘Yes, I *wish* you to read my letter, if I write one, if you wish it, if you understand beforehand the sentiment which leads me to do so. You think that in this there is some want of delicacy towards you, I should have thought the contrary—I should have seen in it a more than ordinary mark of confidence. I give you my whole past, and that irritates you ; I say to you : ‘here, see—that is what I did love, and it is you that I do love!’ That hurts you ! On my honour it is enough to make a man go out of his mind.’

After this, the letter ends amicably with sentimental allusions to some hours spent together at Mantes.

About this time the following letter was written to Miss Gertrude Collier (afterwards Mrs. Tennant):—

‘Shall I never see you again? Is your departure really determined on? But why do you not go by way of Rouen? That road would take you the quickest, and I should be able to say Good-bye to you. If you are dismal at leaving Paris, so am I at your departure. I shall never be able to see your poor house again without a heartache. There are now a crowd of places on the earth, where my soul bleeds when I pass. All is leaving me; my relations die, my friends go away. Nothing remains to me of all that but the memory; yours will always remain dear to me. I shall never forget those long afternoons that I used to go and spend at Rond-Point, our happy readings, our endless talks. When I was living in that dismal Rue de l’Est, I used to promise myself my days of visiting you like holidays; at that time those were my best moments, and in my last stay in Paris with what pleasure did I not carry myself back to that pleasant vanished past! We laughed again there then, do you remember it? For me, that journey made between the deaths of my father and sister, has left in my thoughts as it were, the memory of an hour of rest between two hurricanes, and then, how should I not think of you all with tenderness, you are mixed in so many things of my inner life? I knew you at Trouville in the times when we were *all* there. I have kept for myself the striped red and blue wrapper that Henrietta used to wear, and which she gave Caroline.

‘Who knows when I shall see you again, and if I ever shall see you again? I mistrust all happiness more than ever. I have dark misgivings about the future, and besides, if I see you all again, doubtless all will be changed. I do not say that you will forget me: I do really believe in your friendship, but I have a distrust of time, see you? of time, which rots everything, like the rain, which gnaws the hardest marbles, and the most solid feelings. . . . You will be married perhaps, so many things will have arisen! May heaven make you happy, Gertrude!



That is my deepest prayer. If I did not think that you esteem me too much to ask of me the conventional phrases on this occasion, I would send you a crowd of common-places which I spare you, but you know what I am to you. . . . Farewell—Farewell—"entirely yours." (This is not a formula.)

Apparently our Parisian friend kept no letters that reached her between the 20th of October and the 22nd of December 1846, for the next one is of the latter date, and written at four o'clock in the afternoon; in spite of Maxime Ducamp's assertion that Flaubert dated his letters, if at all, only by the day of the week—a statement which, by the way, is partially true.

'To deny the existence of gloomy sentiments, because they are gloomy is to deny the sun so long as it is not mid-day; truth resides as much in the half-tones as in the violent contrasts. I had in my youth a real friend, who was devoted to me, who would have given his life and his money for me, but he would not have got up half an hour earlier, he would not have accelerated any one of his movements to please me. When we observe life with a little attention we see the cedars less tall and the reeds taller.

'Still, I do not like the habit that certain people have adopted, of bringing down the great enthusiasms and diminishing the exceptionally sublime. Accordingly, de Vigny's book, *Military Servitude and Greatness* shocked me a little at first, because I saw in it a systematic depreciation of blind devotion (of the adoration of the Emperor, for instance) of man's fanaticism for a man, to the benefit of the dry abstract idea of duty, an idea which I have never been able to grasp, and which does not seem to me inherent in human entrails. It is the adoration of the Emperor that is beautiful in the Empire, a love exclusive, absurd, sublime, thoroughly human; that is why I fail to understand what is the meaning for us to-day of the Fatherland. I clearly grasp what it was for the Greek who had only his town, for the Roman who had only Rome, for the savage that one hunts down in the forest, for the Arab whom one chases to his tent. But as for us, do we not at bottom feel



ourselves as much Chinese or English as French? Do not all our dreams go abroad? As children we wish to live in the country of parrots and preserved dates, we grow up with Byron or Virgil, we covet the East on our rainy days, or perhaps we wish to go and make our fortune in the Indies, or exploit sugarcane in America. The earth is our Fatherland, the Universe, the stars, the air, thought itself, that is to say, the infinite in our breasts; but the quarrels of people with people, of canton with district, of man with man, interest me little, and only amuse me when they make great pictures with red backgrounds.'

Young people who believe in inspiration, in long spells of work 'when the fit takes them,' in burning the midnight oil, and the candle at both ends, would do well to ponder on the following piece of advice addressed to the same person as the last letter.

'You have been ill! Do not give way to any more of those excesses in the matter of work, which exhaust, and by reason of that fatigue which they entail, make you lose more time in the end than you have gained; it is not the big dinners and great orgies that nourish, but a regular, systematic diet.

'Work patiently every day an equal number of hours, adopt the habit of a studious and calm life, in the first place you will find a great charm in it, and in the second you will gain strength. I too, have had the mania for spending nights without sleep, which leads to nothing but exhaustion.

'You should mistrust everything which resembles inspiration, for that is often nothing more than a deliberate determination and forced excitement, voluntarily caused, and which did not come of itself; besides we do not live in inspiration; Pegasus walks more often than he gallops, genius consists in showing how to make him take the pace we require, but for that purpose, we must not force his stride, as they say in the riding schools, we must read much, think much, always be concerned with style, and write as little as possible, simply to calm the irritation of the idea, which must needs take a form, and which turns and turns in us, till we have found it an exact, precise

form ; observe that we arrive at producing beautiful things by dint of patience, and protracted effort ; control the violent workings of your mind, which has already made you suffer so much ; fever destroys the intellect, anger has no overpowering force, it is a Colossus whose knees totter, and which wounds itself more than others.'

## CHAPTER VII

### TOUR IN BRITTANY—STYLE

THE correspondence with Ernest Chevalier, still in Corsica, was not dropped. Maxime Ducamp had succeeded, early in 1847, in getting Madame Flaubert to consent to an expedition into Brittany, which was to begin on the 1st of May and last three months; she had seen the necessity of giving Gustave some complete change; and he wrote to inform his old friend of the fact. The letter concludes:—

‘There is nothing new here. Everything goes on in the old lines. My mother always sad. The child walks, lives and cries. My lord Alfred is at Neuville, not doing much, and still the same being that you knew, and the citizen of Rouen is always something gigantically overwhelming and pyramidally inane. For the rest, I hardly ever see any of them, but it is none the less humiliating to reflect that one breathes the same air.’

The Breton expedition did get accomplished. Maxime Ducamp has given an account of it in his *Souvenirs Littéraires*, and the two friends wrote a description of it in alternate chapters. The portions written by Flaubert have been published since his death; those that proceed from the hand of Ducamp are for the present in a state of prudent suppression; the complete copy of the work has probably since his death been deposited in some public library, whose identity is for the present veiled from us. ‘Once we

had the idea of publishing it under the title chosen by Flaubert, *Par les Champs et par les Grèves*. We recoiled before the necessity of corrections. Under pretext of being humorous, and that nothing should be softened down, we had softened so little, that we had softened nothing. We had emptied our bag of nonsense, which was fully furnished. The book is aggressive, touches on everything, proceeds by digressions, speaks of the right of domiciliary visits in connection with Notre Dame d'Auray, of the Chamber of Peers in talking of the battle of the Thirty, attacks men and books, reduces the human ideal to a literary ideal, mixes lyrical exaltation with satire, if not invective, and was made to remain what it is : a manuscript in two copies.'

Shade of Flaubert ! '*Reduces* the human ideal to a literary ideal !'

It seems that the indiscretions of this volume must rest chiefly with Maxime Ducamp, for there is nothing so very terrible in the published work of Flaubert.

The friends travelled in the only way in which travelling is really delightful : knapsack on back, independent of hotels, and public conveyances of all sorts. Brittany was then more foreign to France than even Cardiganshire to England ; passports had to be examined ; and the misgivings of Custom-house officials to be encountered. Mere travellers were naturally objects of suspicion. 'A custom-house officer submitted us to a formal inquiry and searched our knapsacks. He was a little put out of countenance : with a coaxing air he said to us under his breath : "All the same, tell us who you are." Flaubert whispered to him : "A secret commission." We were going down towards Morbihan, when the Custom-house officer caught us up out of breath. "Tell the King not to come here," said he ; "the country is not safe, there are still *chouans*."'



Flaubert was not always a comfortable fellow traveller. 'Between Ploermel and Josselin, at the Halfway Oak, Flaubert suddenly cried, "Beaumanoir drink thy blood!" Then remembering the lord of Tintemar and the "childe" Bembro, he tried to deliver a blow with his stick on my knapsack, which I received on the arm. I begged him to hit less hard, and he replied: "You are only middle-class after all, you don't understand the fight of the Thirty; I think it prodigious." Near Mont St. Michel, on the islet of Tombelaine, where Montgomery fortified himself, he wanted to represent the tournament of the twenty-ninth of June 1559; as the part of Henry the Second would have been reserved for me, I refused. Flaubert said to me: "Ah!—one can easily see that you do not care about history!" Were we mad? It is quite possible.'

But these sufferings were small compared with those inflicted upon poor Ducamp by the 'young phenomenon.' At a fair at Guérand the travellers came upon a man who was showing a monstrosity—or a pair of monstrosities—for authorities differ on this point. According to Ducamp, the 'young phenomenon' was a sheep with five legs and a stiff tail; according to Flaubert there were two,—a cow and a sheep, 'wearing one arm, four shoulders' as the showman stated. Flaubert fell in love with the 'young phenomenon'; made much of the showman; would have him to dine, when he got abominably drunk; encouraged him to write to King Louis Philippe; declared that he would make his fortune. For days the joke lasted. He could talk of nothing but the 'young phenomenon'; would stop in the middle of the road and exhibit poor Ducamp, in the style of the showman, to the trees and hedges as the 'young phenomenon.' At Brest he encountered the 'young phenomenon' again, who had united his, or their, forces with a dancing bear, some per-



forming dogs, a donkey—whose business it was to be baited—and a pack of fighting mongrels. Again the hospitalities of Flaubert proved too much for the sobriety of the showman.

A year later, Maxime Ducamp was lying ill at Paris, having been wounded in the tumults of '48; he was one day disturbed by hearing a strange confusion of sounds on his staircase,—pushing, struggling, bleating, suppressed explosions. Suddenly the door flew open, and Flaubert appeared: 'Gentlemen, allow me to introduce to you the "young phenomenon"; it is three years old, has been approved by the Academy of Medicine, and been honoured by the presence of several crowned heads.' Flaubert had discovered his old friend at a fair in some part of Paris, and spent a hundred francs for the pleasure of this private exhibition. When Flaubert was tickled by anything that amused him extremely, he let nobody off; he repeated his joke with roars of gigantic laughter to anybody and everybody. If you failed to perceive the humour of the situation, he became extremely angry and called you 'a middle-class person,' his most contemptuous term of abuse.

Among Flaubert's descriptions and reflections in *Par les Champs et par les Grèves*, the following are noteworthy in the admirer of the 'young phenomenon':—

'A singular charm breathes from these humble churches. It is not their poverty that moves us, for one would say that they are inhabited, even when no one is present in them. Is it not rather their modesty that enraptures? For with their low belfries, their roofs hiding under the trees, they seem to make themselves small, and humiliate themselves beneath God's great sky. Indeed they have not been built from any motive of pride, or from a pious whim of some great one of the earth in his agony. On the contrary we feel that they are the simple expression of a need, of the honest cry of a desire, and like the shepherd's bed of dry leaves, they are the shelter that the soul

has made to stretch itself at ease in its hours of fatigue. These village churches in a greater degree than those of towns, have the air of belonging to the character of the country which bears them, of sharing more in the life of the families, who from father to son, come to the same spot, there to place their knees on the same stones. Every Sunday, every day, coming in and going out, do they not see and see again the graves of their relatives, whom they thus have near them at their prayers, as at a larger home from which they are never quite absent? These churches then have a sense of a harmony which, enclosed between the baptistry and the graves, completes the life of these men. It is not so with us, who driving eternity beyond the walls, exile our dead to the suburbs to lodge them in the knacker's quarters in the midst of chemical works, and beside artificial manure stores.'

Again, talking of the Lady Chapel of Pont L'Abbé :—

'Man brings here all the sensuality of his heart, suppressed by the climate, starved by poverty, and deposits it at the feet of Mary under the eyes of the divine woman, and thus satisfies and excites his inextinguishable thirst for enjoying and loving. The rain may come in through the roof, there may be neither forms nor chairs in the nave, none the less you will everywhere find this chapel of the Virgin shining, scrubbed, neat with fresh flowers and burning tapers. There the whole religious tenderness of Brittany seems to concentrate itself; there is the softest corner of her heart, her weakness, her passion, her treasure. There may be no flowers in the fields, but there are some in the church; man is poor, but the Virgin is rich; ever beautiful, she smiles for you, and souls in pain go to warm themselves at her knees as at a hearth that never cools. We are astonished at the earnestness of the people in its beliefs; but does one know all the delight, all the joy that they give, all the pleasure that is drawn from them? Is not asceticism a superior Epicureanism, fasting the refinement of good living? Religion has in it almost carnal sensations; prayer has its debauchery, mortification its raptures, and the men who come in the evening to kneel before this dressed statue feel there, too, heart-beatings and wild intoxication, while in the streets the children of the

town coming back from school, stop thoughtful and awe-stricken to look at the woman glowing in the window who gazes down upon them with her gentle eyes.'

At St. Malo the friends visited the tomb of Chateaubriand, placed on the precipitous side of a small island in the bay facing the west.

'There he will sleep, his head turned to the west, in the tomb built on a cliff, his immortality will be like his life, deserted of all and surrounded by storms. The waves with the centuries will long murmur round this great monument; they will spring to his feet in the tempests, or in the summer mornings, when the white sails are spread and the swallow comes from beyond the seas, long and gentle, they will bring him the voluptuous melancholy of distances, and the caress of the open air. And the days thus slipping by, while the billows of his native beach shall be for ever swinging between his birthplace and his tomb, the heart of René, cold at last, will slowly crumble into nothingness to the endless rhythm of that eternal music.'

Louis Bouilhet once said of Flaubert, 'There is a curse upon him; the man is a lyric poet, and cannot write a verse.' In reading such passages as the above we feel the lyrical tendency, and since Flaubert has left no verses behind him, will do wisely to accept the remainder of Bouilhet's statement.

In the same volume in which these poetical fragments occur there is an equally poetical description of a slaughter-house; and there can be no doubt that Flaubert would have protested that the Breton churches, the tomb of Chateaubriand, the low quarters of Brest, and the slaughter-house, were alike worthy of the artist's pen and pains; that the description of a disembowelled ox is neither more nor less artistic, provided it be well executed, than the description of a fine man stepping out of the sea after a bathe, or

of a castle which has been the home of one of the makers of romance.

At this period of his life, and at times during all his life, Flaubert was undoubtedly contrary; he deliberately said and wrote things which he knew would be shocking to others, but which were not shocking to himself. In this there was a certain amount of temper; the man felt himself to be what he was, large-hearted, affectionate, brave, honest, unselfish and pure, but he was not conventional; that is to say, he did not accept as final the inconsistent, fluctuating and yet dogmatic views of the society in which he lived, on questions of morality and questions of taste. He was a citizen not only of the world in which he lived, but of all the world that has ever been. Aristophanes and Horace were not to him books more or less well printed and bound in calf; they were men—living men, honest men, good men—men who lived in great times, and played a great part in those times; the best specimens of two epochs, when men were abnormally active. It seemed to him far less impure to talk as they talk, or as Falstaff talks in the *Merry Wives of Windsor*, than to be a smug citizen of Rouen, applauding the government for protecting morality, and at the same time slyly sniggering in coffee-houses about the gay life that is led by students at Paris. There is nothing more pitiful than the conventional morality of the nineteenth century. It is the age of whitewash; and, what is worse, the age of *double entente*. The coarsest statement, the grossest act, are less demoralising than the dainty allusion, the veiled but not hidden vice. All this Flaubert felt, and at the same time saw, that it was not universally felt even by his intimate friends. Further, on many subjects he was predisposed to be less delicate than other people through having been the son of a hard-working enthusiastic surgeon, and accustomed



from his earliest youth to the talk and the sight of the dissecting room. He and his sister, before they were ten years old, used to peep through a window and watch their father at work. A surgeon, moreover, will speak to you of a well-executed dissection as a beautiful thing, beautiful in the artistic sense ; and he is right ; the horror with which ordinary humanity regards the dissecting table is a weakness the result of ignorance ; while the curiosity that is begot of this horror is none the less unwholesome.

A man who deliberately thinks, says, and publishes what is impure to himself, is, from every point of view, artistic as well as moral, indefensible ; but it is quite possible to have an entirely different atmosphere from that of the world in which one lives ; to see more and more plainly. This was eventually Flaubert's case ; he eventually came to write what was repellent to people of narrow experience, without being aware of the fact ; was dismayed, aggrieved, when he discovered what he had done. On the other hand, it is difficult to acquit him of having allowed himself to be influenced, in the earlier period of his life, by a reaction against the nerveless propriety of the middle-class man. The easy optimism of frivolous persons, ready to accept any formula which acquits them of the necessity of thinking for themselves, was a red rag to Flaubert. He saw the world full of sorrow as well as of joy ; he saw that the innocent often were brought down and in misery, while the guilty flourished ; and he became furious with indignation when other people, to excuse their slothfulness or cowardice, refused to open their eyes to obvious facts. For this reason he invariably rejoiced in the discovery of baseness in the great ones of the earth, revelled in scandals by which spotless characters were suddenly discovered to be inwardly tainted. Such things were so many documentary proofs that this is not the best



of all possible worlds, but a world of conflicting forces, in which good and evil are strangely and inexplicably mingled, and in which even the best people act under the influence of mixed motives.

Flaubert's health was much benefited by the tour in Brittany; on the day of starting he was seized with one of his 'attacks of nerves,' as he was in the habit of calling them, and never again during the three months that the holiday lasted.

Immediately on the return from Brittany, the two friends set to work to write their book. Flaubert describes the process, in a way which becomes only too familiar as each successive work is brought into the world with even greater difficulty than its predecessor.

'You ask me for information about our work, Maxime's and mine; you must know then that I am driven wild by writing; style, which is a thing that I take very much in earnest, agitates my nerves horribly. I vex myself, I prey on myself, there are days when I am quite ill from it, and when I am feverish at night. The further I go on the less capable I find myself of expressing the idea. What a quaint mania it is to pass one's life wearing oneself out over words, and sweating all day long over arranging sentences; there are occasions, it is true, when one rejoices hugely, but this pleasure is bought at the cost of how much discouragement and bitterness? To day, for example, I have spent eight hours in correcting five pages, and I think that I have worked well; judge of the rest! it is pitiful. Whatever happens I will finish this work, which in its very object is a hard bit of exercise, then next summer I will see about tempting Saint Anthony. If that does not go from the very beginning, I have done with style for several long years. I will go in for Greek, history, archæology, anything, in short everything easier. For I often think the useless trouble, I give myself, stupid.'

In another passage he compares his difficulties with style to those of a man 'who has a correct ear and who plays the

violin out of tune, his fingers refuse to produce exactly the sound of which he is conscious. "Then the tears flow from the eyes of the poor scraper, and the bow falls from his fingers."

Every now and then Flaubert was compelled to breathe the same air as the citizens of Rouen at close quarters. Here is a description of such an occasion :—

'I have recently seen something fine, and I am still overpowered by the grotesque and at the same time mournful impression which this spectacle has left upon me. I have been present at a reform dinner! What taste! What cookery! What wines! and what speeches! Nothing has given me a more complete contempt for success, than the contemplation of the price at which it is obtained. I remained cold with the nausea of disgust in the midst of the patriotic enthusiasm which was stirred by "the helm of the state"—"the abyss into which we are drifting"—"the honour of our flag"—"the shadow of our standards"—"the fraternity of peoples," and other cakes of the same meal. Never will the finest works of the masters receive the fourth part of that applause; no book of de Musset will ever cause such cries of admiration to be uttered as came from all parts of the room to greet the virtuous bellowings of M. Odilon Barrot, and the lamentations of M. Crémieux on the state of our finances. And after a session till past nine o'clock in front of cold turkey, sucking pig, and in the company of my locksmith, who patted me on the shoulder at the fine passages, I came away chilled to the entrails. However dismal one's opinion of men may be, bitterness rises in one's heart when such delirious inanity is flaunted before you, such a tangle of imbecility. In nearly all the speeches there was laudation of Béranger. How this good Béranger is ill-used! I owe him a grudge for the adoration which the middle-class minds bestow on him. There are people of great talent who have the misfortune to be admired by the small natures; bouilli is disagreeable because it is the basis of small housekeeping; Béranger is the bouilli of modern poetry; everybody can eat of it, and like it.'

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE DEATH OF ALFRED LE POITTEVIN

DURING the spring of 1848 it became clear that the days of Alfred le Poittevin were numbered. Flaubert and Ducamp went to visit him at Neuville; they found him 'marching gaily to death,' the victim of an incurable disease of the heart. At parting he asked Ducamp to send him a copy of *Spinos*a from Paris.

On the third of April 1848 Flaubert wrote the following letter to Ducamp :—

' Alfred died on Monday at midnight ; I buried him yesterday. I watched him for two nights ; I wrapped him in his winding sheet, I gave him the kiss of farewell, and I saw his coffin soldered. I spent two long days there ; while watching him I read Kreutzer's *Religions of Antiquity*. The window was open, the night was superb, one heard the cock crow, and a moth fluttered round the candle. I shall never forget all that, nor the appearance of his face, nor the first night, at midnight, the distant sound of a hunting horn which came to me through the forest. On the Wednesday I went for a walk all the afternoon with a bitch that followed me uncalled. This bitch had taken a fancy to him and always accompanied him when he went out alone. The night before his death she howled horribly and could not be silenced. I sat down on the moss in several places, I smoked, I looked at the sky, I lay down behind a mass of broom tufts and I slept.

'The last night I read *Autumn Leaves* ; I always pitched upon the pieces that he liked the best, or that had for me a bearing

upon the present. From time to time I went to lift the veil which had been put over his face to look at him. I was wrapped in a cloak, which had belonged to my father, and which he only wore once, on the day of Caroline's wedding. When the day appeared, towards four o'clock, the watcher and I began our work. I lifted him, turned him round and enfolded him. The impression of his cold, stiff limbs remained all day in my finger ends. He was dreadfully decomposed, we put two sheets upon him. When he had been thus arranged he was like an Egyptian mummy enclosed in its bandages, and I felt, I cannot tell you what a sentiment of joy and liberty for him. The mist was white, the forest began to show in outline on the sky, the two torches blazed in the dawning whiteness; birds sang, and I repeated to myself that phrase of his *Belial*.

“He will go, happy bird, to salute the rising sun amid the pine trees”: or rather I heard his voice saying it to me, and the whole day I was deliciously possessed by it. They placed him in the hall; the doors were taken off their hinges and the great air of the morning came in with the coolness of the rain that had begun to fall. He was carried by men to the cemetery; the journey lasted more than an hour. Following behind I could see the coffin swing with the movement of a boat that is pushed on rollers. The service was atrocious in its length. At the cemetery the earth was moist; I approached the edge of the grave and watched the pellets fall one by one; it seemed to me that there fell a hundred thousand.

“To return to Rouen I mounted on the box with Bouilhet; the rain fell heavily; the horses went at a gallop, I shouted to urge them on; the air did me worlds of good. I slept all that night, and I may say all to-day.

“That is what I have lived on since Tuesday evening. I had unheard of perceptions and inexpressible whirls of ideas; a heap of things came back to me with choirs of music and clouds of perfumes.

“Up to the time when it was impossible for him to do anything, he used to read Spinoza till one o'clock in the morning, every night in bed. On one of the last days when the window was opened and the sun came into the room, he said: “Shut it; that is too beautiful, too beautiful.”



‘There were moments, dear Max, when I had singular thoughts of you, and made sad comparisons of images. Farewell, I embrace you, and I have a strong wish to see you, for I want to tell you things incomprehensible.’

Thus did the soul of Flaubert find temporary consolation in description. He never forgot, never ceased to regret, Alfred le Poittevin.



## CHAPTER IX

### THE ST. ANTHONY

FROM April 1848 to May 1849 there is a gap in the correspondence. At this time Flaubert was working hard at the *St. Anthony*, and his health had failed again. Maxime Ducamp, with whom he corresponded throughout this period, having suppressed the letters, we have no information at first hand.

Early in 1849 Ducamp determined to carry out a project which he had long formed: to travel for two or three years in the East. He wished to take Flaubert with him, Flaubert who had dreamed all his life of 'stirring the sands of Syria with his own feet,' of riding on camels and elephants, of watching the sunset behind the pyramids, of bathing in the Ganges, and making a pilgrimage to Ceylon, 'which the ancients called Taprobana; what a name! Taprobana!' The mother reluctantly consented; she could not resist the representations made by a man of such high medical authority, so old a friend, as Dr. Jules Cloquet. The period of departure was fixed for the time when the *Temptation* should be finished. Ducamp patiently waited, and when the appointed epoch arrived—the autumn of 1849—before departing to the land of his dreams, Flaubert read his work to Ducamp and Bouilhet; up to that time they had been entirely ignorant of the nature of the treatment which he would give to his subject; he had refused to confide his plan

to them till the whole was finished ; then he would read the complete work.

Early in the autumn Flaubert wrote to Ducamp, 'the *Temptation* is finished, come !' Ducamp started at once for Croisset ; found Bouilhet already established there ; and the reading began. It lasted four days ; eight hours a day ; from mid-day till four in the afternoon ; from eight in the evening till midnight. At the beginning, Flaubert waving the pages above his head, cried : 'If you do not utter howls of enthusiasm, the reason is, that nothing is capable of moving you.'

For two-and-thirty hours the friends listened in silence ; at the end of each reading Madame Flaubert used to inquire, 'Well ?' and they had no reply to make. Before the last sitting Ducamp and Bouilhet conferred privately ; they determined to give their opinion frankly, without reserve ; the question of Flaubert's literary future was at stake.

'That evening, after the last reading, towards midnight, Flaubert tapping on the table said : "Now, it is with the three of us, tell me frankly what you think." Bouilhet replied : "We think you ought to throw it into the fire and never speak of it again."'

A conversation followed, which lasted till eight o'clock in the morning ; Flaubert at last, conquered rather than convinced, gave way. *St. Anthony* was not burned but consigned to a drawer. As the friends left the room Maxime Ducamp thought he saw the flutter of a black dress trailing on the staircase, and that it was Madame Flaubert, whose maternal love had driven her to listen for the end of the conference. He gratuitously assumes that she came to the conclusion that the friends were jealous of her son.

In 1869, after the publication of *Salammbô*, Flaubert again took up the *St. Anthony*, and again put it aside ;

in 1876 he started afresh; and this time the work was published.

Though the publication of the *St. Anthony* belongs to the end of Flaubert's life, its creation, the influences under which it was composed, belong to the beginning of his career; and though the work that we have is considerably reduced in bulk from that to which Ducamp and Bouilhet listened in silence for two-and-thirty hours, its merits and defects are obviously the same.

*The Temptation of St. Anthony* is a succession of dissolving views, a pageantry of rich fancies, in which all the fables that have haunted the human brain take shape, and are marshalled before the mystified saint.

The scene opens at sunset; the holy man is watching the departure of the great planet from a platform on the side of a mountain in the Thebaid. In one direction he sees the fertile level valley of the Nile, and the mighty river shining like a lake on the horizon; in the other the desert stretches its monotonous billows of yellowish grey to the feet of the Libyan mountains, whose outlines are slightly softened by violet mists; in the intervening space floats a fine dust of gold melting in the vibrations of light.

St. Anthony expresses disgust with life; reviews the past, and regrets the past content. Night comes; a wedge-shaped flight of swift-winged birds passes overhead; he wishes he could follow them. In the vague whiteness of the night appear pointed noses, upright ears, gleaming eyes; there is a sound of moving gravel. St. Anthony advances; it is a troop of jackals, they skurry off, all except one; the saint would like to stroke him, but the animal makes off; again the bitterness of solitude. The stars appear, and on the platform falls the shadow of a great cross; the saint withdraws into his hut and reads the Scriptures; he begins to wonder by

what power Jesus resisted the temptations of the devil, and Solomon those of the Queen of Sheba. The former clearly, because he was God, the latter because he was a magician; what a sublime science is magic! As the saint allows his imagination to dwell on it, the shadow of the cross changes its forms; the arms become two horns; St. Anthony horrified, calls to heaven for help, and the shadow resumes its original shape. The saint rises; again his past triumphs recur to him; he thinks he sees a procession winding its way to the mountain, possibly a wealthy female penitent coming to ask for counsel; he hopes it may be so, calls out and gives directions as to the path; echoes answer him, and he distinguishes other voices, as if the air were speaking, which offer him the love of women, wealth, military glory, popularity, rest, satisfied vengeance. Then things change; the palm-tree at the edge of his platform becomes the gigantic bust of a woman leaning over the abyss; phantoms float past him, showing against the night like scarlet paintings on ebony; terrified, fatigued, exhausted, the saint falls upon his mat.

Then there appears upon the earth a vast shadow, more subtile than other shadows, with uncertain edges; it is the Devil leaning on the roof of the hut with huge bat wings outspread, under which nestle the seven deadly sins. St. Anthony dreams that he is floating away in a boat on the flowery Nile; he wakes, is thirsty, finds his pitcher broken; is hungry, the jackals have taken his loaf; then there arises before him the image of a rich banquet; he recognises the wile of the Tempter; but even as he congratulates himself upon his deliverance, he stumbles over a metal cup. He lifts it; coins pour from it, jewels, infinite wealth; he flings himself upon the heap of riches; finds nothing; seizes his knife; it slips from his hand; he falls against the side of his cabin in a trance.



He is transported in the spirit to Alexandria, to Constantinople, where the Emperor places his own diadem upon him ; he finds himself in a hall where a king feasts with his courtiers ; the king is Nebuchadnezzar ; Anthony watches him and reads his thoughts, they become his own thoughts ; he is himself Nebuchadnezzar, disgusted with the abject crowd of flatterers who surround him ; he longs to wallow in baseness, to degrade before men the object of their fears ; he flings himself on all fours on the table, and bellows like a bull. He has fallen in his own cabin, and wakes.

Horried at the sinful vision he implores pardon, and inflicts penance ; while he is still vigorously scourging himself, and to his dismay finding pleasure in the blows, the procession of the Queen of Sheba arrives. She offers him all that the heart of man can desire, or imagine it desires, including her love. He rejects her. When she has disappeared, St. Anthony discovers a strange figure squatting at the threshold of his cabin ; it proves to be Hilarion, his former pupil, who gives Anthony a flattering description of his own life ; the saint becomes uplifted with pride of intellect ; Hilarion dexterously takes advantage of this weakness to insinuate the scientific baselessness of his faith, reproaches him with his idleness in not studying its origins ; he takes a pen from his belt, and, with a roll of papyrus in his hand, prepares to take down the words of wisdom that drop from Anthony's lips. The saint maintains the authority of Scripture ; Hilarion points out its contradictions ; Anthony longs for wider knowledge, and Hilarion leads him into a vast hall in which all the heresies are disputing. The heresiarchs pass in turn before Anthony, their attendants behind them practising the rites of their particular heresy. First comes the prophet Manes, enthroned, with his ninety-five disciples around him, all



gleaming with oil, thin and very pale ; the Priscillianians, who believed that the Devil created the world ; Valentinians, who declared it to be the work of a God in delirium ; the Carpocratians ; the Nicolaitans ; the Messalians, who held work to be sinful ; the Paternians, who thought that the inferior parts of the body were made by the Devil, and therefore eat, drink, and debauch themselves.

Tertullian strides in, clothed in a Carthaginian mantle, and denounces the heresiarchs ; reveals their previous history. All flee, and in the place of Tertullian is seen a beautiful woman ; it is Priscilla, the prophetess, the companion of Montanus ; close to her appears Maximilla, his other companion, eventually Montanus himself. Follow the Arcontics in hair shirts, the Tatianians in garments of reeds, the Valesians, who emasculate themselves ; the Cainites, who worship Cain, and Judas, by whose agency the death of Christ was brought about, and the consequent Redemption. Then a tumultuous band clothed in wolf-skins, wearing crowns of thorns and armed with clubs, rush in ; they are the Circoncellions, who wish to reduce everything to one dead level of ruin. The hall is filled with tumult ; after a while, peace is restored, and Arius is heard disputing with Sabellius ; all the heretics take part in the discussion, they vaunt again and again to Anthony their martyrs, their ecstasies, their prayers, their raptures ; they brandish before him their gospels : the gospel of the Hebrews, the gospel of the Lord, the gospel of Thomas.

Then Anthony is dragged roughly into another hall ; there he sees a long chrysalis of the colour of blood ; it has the head of a man, surrounded by rays, and the word Knouphis written in Greek characters upon it. On the walls of the room are medallions representing the heads of animals, an ox, a lion, an eagle, a dog, an ass. Men and women sit

huddled together in silence, distinguishable by the glimmering light from some clay lamps hung under the images on the walls. They talk under their breath of their homes, of their families, of imminent persecution; boast of the ease with which the Pagans are deceived, who believe that they worship Knouphis; suddenly an Energumen stands up and chants their profession of faith; in its pauses they rock themselves and sing in cadence, Kyrie Eleison. At length the Energumen performs the incantations of a snake-charmer, and chants the praises of the serpent elevated by Moses in the wilderness, drunk by the Messiah in the water of Baptism. A sod of turf is brought and held to a huge basket, which stands ornamented with flowers in the midst of the hall, and a monstrous python slowly emerges, to be caressed with rapture by the faithful Ophidians. St. Anthony swoons with horror; as he recovers, he sees the Nile winding like a vast serpent between its sands.

Again he is transported, this time to the vaults of the Colosseum; he is with the Martyrs, who shrink from martyrdom, but recover to curse a Montanist who is discovered among them. Drugs are given them which they eagerly swallow; they pass in to the arena; Anthony finds himself, in the darkness of night, in the burial-ground of the Martyrs; noble women come secretly to mourn over their tombs; others bring wine and food for the dead, and practise heathen rites over the graves of their kindred. As the morning dawns they disperse; and Anthony is transported to India, where he watches the self-oblation of a gymnosophist.

Again he wakes in his hut. A fire approaches; it proceeds from a bronze vase carried by a man followed by a woman; the flame is blue and fluttering; the man is Simon Magus; the woman Ennoia, who has been Helen of Troy, Lucretia,

Delilah, the Moon. Simon Magus vaunts his magic powers ; prepares to bestow on Anthony the second baptism, the baptism of fire ; the saint in despair cries for holy water ; the mysterious fire passes away in smoke ; Simon and Ennoia disappear.

The smoke has become a thick mist ; Anthony is lost ; stretches out his arms in vain to grasp the cross ; a wind rises, the mist is dispersed, and a gloriously beautiful youth appears, his fair long hair descending upon his shoulders ; he is attended by a short snub-nosed man of simple countenance. These are Apollonius of Tyana, the worker of miracles, and his faithful Damis.

Damis and Apollonius tell their story turn about ; Damis proves to be a kind of Sancho Panza, and continually interrupts his companion to compel Anthony's admiration, who listens to the tale with impatience, and frequently orders the strangers off the premises. Apollonius eventually offers to show Anthony Jesus in person, whereupon the saint falls at the foot of the cross in prayer, and Apollonius and his companion, loudly contemptuous of his brute superstition, float off into the air and disappear.

Apollonius had awakened in Anthony the sin of curiosity ; he wishes to know something of the pagan gods. They pass before him : the antediluvian gods, formless or hideous ; Vishnu and the Hindu hierarchy of divinities ; Buddha himself, who tells his story, while Hilarion points out the similarities with the incidents of the Gospels. The Hindu gods disappear in smoke as Buddha ends his tale, which Hilarion declares to be the faith of hundreds of millions of men.

A mysterious creature follows. It has the head of a man and the body of a fish ; it advances upright, flapping with its tail ; it has small arms, a patriarchal countenance. St.

Anthony laughs. The figure deprecates ridicule, and announces itself as Oannes, an ancient god of the Chaldeans. This suggests Babylon to the saint, who is transported to the temple of Belus, and the garden of Ashtaroth. Ormuz appears, and is driven away by Ahriman; the great Diana of the Ephesians bewails the loss of her divinity; a procession of the votaries of the great mother enters and performs her rites.

The scene returns to Egypt; and in the far distance, on the other side of the Nile, a woman stands veiled, bearing an infant. It is Isis; she lifts her head to heaven and her voice is heard, as she tells of the loss of Osiris, and of the Egyptian worshippers.

The gods of Olympus are then revealed, seated in majesty on their thrones. Their beauty moves Anthony, Hilarion praises them; points out the details in their worship which correspond with the Christian faith; Anthony, in horror, recites the Apostles' Creed. Then Olympus is stirred; a voice is heard, indistinct and terrible, like the roaring of waves, the sound of the forest in the storm, the bellowing of the wind among precipices; it is the cry of the older gods, of the Titans, announcing the end of the dynasty of Jove. Jupiter comes down from his throne, his thunder-bolt is extinguished in smoke; Minerva, Hercules, Pluto, Diana, Mars, Bacchus, Apollo, Aphrodite herself, pass into the abyss.

A procession winds its way among the rocks, formed of all the divinities that men have ever worshipped, the spirits they have feared. The gods of Scythia, of the Cimmerians, of the Etrurians; the ancient Latin gods; the household gods of Rome; even the god Crepitus.

Last of all is heard a clap of thunder, and a voice:—

‘I was the God of armies, the Lord, the Lord God.

‘I spread the tents of Jacob upon the hills, and nurtured my people as they fled in the sands.



‘I am He who burned Sodom ; who made the Deluge swallow the earth. It is I who drowned Pharaoh, with the princes, the sons of kings, the chariots of war and the horsemen.

‘A jealous God, I hated other gods. I crushed the impure ; I beat down the proud : and my desolation ran from the right hand to the left, like a dromedary that is set loose in a field of corn.

‘To deliver Israel I chose the simple. Angels with wings of flame spoke to them in the bushes.

‘Perfumed with nard, with cinnamon, with myrrh, with transparent robes, and high-heeled shoes, women, brave in heart, went to slay captains. The wind, as it passed, carried away my prophets.

‘I had graven my law upon tables of stone.

‘It shut in my people as in a citadel. They were my people, and I was their God. The earth was mine, the men were mine, with their thoughts, their works, their labouring tools, and their posterity.

‘My ark rested in a three-fold sanctuary, behind curtains of purple and burning lamps. I had a whole tribe, who swung censers, to serve me, and the High Priest in a robe of hyacinth, bearing on his breast precious stones, arranged in order of symmetry.

‘Woe ! Woe ! The Holy of Holies is opened, the veil is torn, the odours of sacrifice are lost in all the winds. The jackal howls in the sepulchres ; my temple is destroyed, my people are scattered.

‘They have strangled the priests with the girdles of their garments. The women are captives ; the precious vessels are melted !

‘*(The voice passing into the distance.)*

‘I was the God of armies, the Lord, the Lord God.

‘*(Then there is a vast silence ; a night of deep darkness.)*

‘ANTHONY. All are passed.

‘A VOICE. I remain.

‘[And Hilarion is before him, but transfigured, like an archangel, beaming with light as the sun, and so tall that Anthony throws back his head to look up at him.]

‘ANTHONY. Who then art thou ?



'HILARION. My kingdom is of the measure of the Universe ; and my desire has no ends. I move always, setting free the mind and weighing worlds, without hate, without fear, without pity, without love, and without God. I am called Science.

'ANTHONY (*starting back*). Thou shouldst rather be . . . the Devil.

'HILARION (*fixing on him his glowing eyes*). Dost thou care to see him ?

'The saint gives way to his curiosity, and the Devil picking him up on his horns flies away with him into space.

'The vast wings of the Devil conceal him from Anthony, who feels as though he were floating on a cloud ; the desert becomes a yellow stain on the earth's surface, the ocean a puddle. Anthony wishes to see the mountains, behind which the sun sets ; the devil speaks ; "The sun never sets" : the voice does not startle Anthony, it seems like an echo of his own thought. Soon the earth is a ball ; it is seen turning on its poles in the midst of the azure, rushing round the sun ; again the voice says :

"Humble thyself, pride of man ; the earth is not the centre of the Universe."

They arrive at the moon, which proves to be desert ; glide through the fields of stars. Sometimes a comet passes them, then the calm of the numberless lights is restored. Anthony makes out the paths of the stars, the interlacing of their orbits, he despises the limitation of his old imaginings ; at last, overburdened with the majesty of infinity, he asks, 'What is the object of all that ?' 'It has no object,' is the reply.

The Devil describes suns beyond suns, solar systems beyond solar systems ; and Anthony, oppressed and terrified, cries, 'Enough, enough, I am afraid. I am falling into the abyss.'

'THE DEVIL (*stopping and balancing himself softly on his wings*). The Nothing is not ! The Void is not ! Everywhere there are bodies which move on the immovable background of space ; —and if that were limited by anything, it would be no longer Space, but a body ; it has no bounds.

'ANTHONY (*in amazement*). No bounds !

'THE DEVIL. Rise into the sky for ever and for ever ; thou wilt never reach the summit ! Descend below the earth for millions and millions of centuries, thou wilt never touch the bottom ;

for there is no bottom, no summit, no height, no depth, no bound ; and Space is comprised in God, who is not a portion of space, so much, or so much less greatness, but the Infinite !

‘ANTHONY (*slowly*). Matter then . . . is part of God ?

‘THE DEVIL. Why not ? Can’st thou know where He ends ?

‘ANTHONY. On the contrary, I humble myself, I abase myself before His power !

‘THE DEVIL. And yet thou wouldst bend Him ! Thou speakest to Him, thou adornest Him even with virtues, with kindness, justice, mercy, instead of recognising that He possesses all perfections !

‘To conceive more than that, is to conceive God beyond God, being beyond being. He is then the only Being, the only Substance.

‘If Substance could be divided, it would lose its nature, it would be no longer itself, God would exist no more. It is then indivisible, as it is infinite ; and if He had a body, He would be composed of parts, He would no longer be one, He would no longer be infinite. He is then not a person.

‘ANTHONY. What ! My prayers, my sobs, the sufferings of my flesh, the raptures of my ardour, all that—has gone to a lie—into space . . . uselessly—like the cry of a bird, like a whirl of dead leaves. (*He weeps.*) Oh no ! There is above everything, some one, a great Soul, a Lord, a Father, whom my heart adores, and who must love me !

‘THE DEVIL. Thou desirest that God should not be God ; for if He felt love, anger, or pity, He would pass from His perfection to a greater or smaller perfection. He cannot descend to a sentiment ; or limit Himself in a form.

‘ANTHONY. One day however, I shall see Him.

‘THE DEVIL. With the blessed, wilt thou not ? When the finite will enjoy the infinite in a restricted place enclosing the absolute !

‘ANTHONY. I care not, there must be a heaven for good, and a hell for evil.

‘THE DEVIL. Do the requirements of thy reason make the law of things ? Doubtless evil is indifferent to God since the earth is covered with it ! Is it from impotence that He endures it ? Or from cruelty that He maintains it ? Thinkest thou that

He is continually busying Himself with re-adjusting the Universe as an imperfect work, and that he watches over all the movements of all beings, from the flight of the butterfly to the thought of man?

‘If He created the Universe, His providence is superfluous. If Providence exists, the creation is defective.

‘But good and evil have to do with thee alone,—as night and day, pleasure and pain, death and birth, which are in relation to one corner of space, to a special environment, to a particular interest. Since the Infinite alone is permanent, there is Infinity; and that is all.

‘(THE DEVIL *has spread his long wings further and further, and now they cover space.*)

‘ANTHONY (*no longer sees. He faints*). A horrible dread chills me to the bottom of my soul. It surpasses the power of my pain. It is as a death deeper than death. I stand in the immensity of darkness. Darkness enters into me. My consciousness breaks under this expansion of nothingness!

‘THE DEVIL. But things happen to thee only by the intervention of thy mind. As a concave mirror it deforms what it reflects: and means fail thee to verify its exactness.

‘Never wilt thou know Space in its full extent; consequently canst thou not form any idea of its cause, have an exact notion of God, nor even say that the Universe is infinite,—for first wouldst thou need to know Infinity.

‘Form is perhaps an error of thy senses, Substance an imagination of thy thought.

‘Unless, the Universe being a perpetual flowing and reflowing, the appearance to the contrary is the truest that there is, the illusion the only reality.

‘But art thou sure of seeing? Art thou even sure of living? Perhaps nothing is!

‘(*The Devil has seized St. Anthony; and holding him at arm’s length, he glares at him with open maw, ready to devour him.*)

‘Adore me then! and curse the phantom that thou callest God!

‘(*Anthony in a last movement of hope raises his eyes to heaven. The Devil leaves him.*)’

At this point we feel that the visions are ended; Anthony

has been tempted by the lust of carnal delights, by the lust of money, by the lust of power, by the lust of the imagination ; he has been shown all the variations of his own creed, the creeds of other peoples, the beauty of the gods of Greece, the homely superstitions of Italy ; at last he has been confronted with Science, which bids him humble himself before the futility alike of these, and of his own faith, to which he still clings, not by the force of reason, but by the strength of an habitual sentiment. Now is the time to be rewarded by the final apparition. But no, Flaubert has not yet emptied his bag of monstrosities : Death and Debauchery court the saint, wearied after his struggle with the Devil ; the Sphinx and Chimæra argue in his presence ; the Gryphon appears, and other less familiar monsters, the Zadhuzag, the Unicorn, the Catoblepas, the Basilisk, Pigmies, the men who rest beneath the shadows of their own feet, which turn into a forest wherein the Cynocephali leap and bound ; all sea beasts ; things that are neither animal nor vegetable. Anthony enraptured with the various forms of life, thinks he is assisting at its beginning ; wishes to be all forms himself, to descend to the beginnings of matter—to be matter—when ‘the day at last appears, and, as when the curtains are lifted from a tabernacle, clouds of gold rolling away in heavy spirals disclose the sky. In the very centre, in the very disc of the sun, beams the face of Jesus Christ. Anthony makes the sign of the cross and returns to his prayers.’

Were Bouilhet and Ducamp right in their summary, complete, final condemnation of this work ?

Its defects must have been far more apparent in the original and longer form ; but it was always susceptible of reduction. Would it not have been better to advise ‘nonum prematur in annum,’ to have put it aside, and to have returned to it when it had become unfamiliar ?



Ducamp's criticism is unsympathetic and pedantic. 'Under the pretext of pushing romanticism to its furthest limits, Flaubert, without suspecting it, had taken a retrograde step.'

This was not a question of romantic and classic; it was a question whether Flaubert had succeeded in realising his literary dream of a prose poem, whether a form, almost peculiar to himself, had acquired the necessary substance to take its place as a work of art.

To judge such a work it must be judged from the author's point of view, and not from any preconceived notions of what is and what is not admissible in art. Flaubert's idea was to write a dream which should pass like a flash,—all in one breath; the reader was to be carried on from one glorious vision to another without respite, without thought; at the same time he was to be reduced, mentally, to St. Anthony's condition; to be in the fourth century A.D., with no knowledge that would make the existence of the Basilisk and the Catoblepas less probable to him than that of the elephant and the hippopotamus; with the inclination to marvels, with faith in magic, and accustomed to see pagan rites and ceremonies in full activity around him. St. Anthony had not the comfortable assurance of the nineteenth century with regard to the futility of Montanus and Apollonius; he had seen men living like the Indian Fakirs, and calling themselves Christians; he had seen devout and honourable women kneeling at the feet of hermits; he had himself seen and defied the devil; the air for him was full of evil spirits.

Flaubert is unable to maintain the saint's simplicity of mind; sometimes we are St. Anthony, sometimes we are criticising St. Anthony, often St. Anthony becomes a mere interjection. At times the note of low comedy jars upon us; at others our reveries are disturbed by a sarcastic remark

which brings us to earth again; at times we drop from our high visions to the merest bathos.

Further, to be certain of their effect the allusions in such a work should be tolerably familiar; if explanations are required, they should be introduced in an artistic form, as, for instance, is excellently well done when the orgies of the Ophidians are described; but we are not affected in any way, except to sheer boredom, by pages from Pliny's *Natural History* and similar works, such as the following:—

‘All kinds of horrible beasts rise up; the Tragelaphus, half stag half ox; the Myrmecoleo, lion in front ant behind, whose genitals are reversed; the Python Aksar, sixty cubits long, which terrified Moses; the great weasel Pastinaca, which kills trees by its odour; the Presteros, which renders mad by its touch; the Mirag, a horned hare living in the isles of the sea, etc. etc.’

Again, Apollonius is made to say:—

‘We came back by the region of the Aromates, by the land of the Gangarides, the promontory of Comaria, the country of the Sachalites, the Adramites and the Homerites;—then across the Cassanian mountains, the Red Sea and the island of Topazus, we penetrated into Ethiopia, by the kingdom of the Pygmies.’

Doubtless Flaubert could have given chapter and verse for all these names, and have pointed out the correct route on a map of the ancient world; for in these things he was conscientious; but to the ordinary reader, even to the ordinary classical scholar, these strings of names mean little or nothing; nor are we all equally in love with the sound of Taprobana. In verse we can feel the majesty of ‘vast Acroceraunian walls’ and revel in the mere sound, without requiring to know the locality of the cliffs in question; but in prose we require an association as well as a sound. This love of mere names is an inherent vice in Flaubert; it spoils

a good deal of the *Anthony*, a good deal more of *Salammbô*, and nearly mars the *St. Julien*. He had a retentive memory for such names, especially when they were associated with grotesque facts, and could not be persuaded that for artistic purposes they were valueless. He uses them recklessly, as for instance: 'The rustic gods withdraw weeping, Sartor, Sarrator, Vervactor, Collina, Vallona, Hostilinus, all covered with little hooded mantles and carrying a hoe, or a fork, a mattock, a pick.' In the same way there is a whole page of minor gods whose names and attributes are given, as they might be in a folk-lore dictionary. 'You wanted to make music, and you have only made a noise,' was a sound criticism of the friends.

A similar defect is the accumulation of grotesque faiths and superstitions among the heresies; Flaubert had a mania for the grotesque, he never forgot an illustration of it; often this leads him to a repetition of effects, he will not be done with his joke; it is the story of the 'young phenomenon.'

Further, Flaubert had a most unhappy knack of calling his books by the wrong names. This is not a *Temptation of St. Anthony*; it is a *Vision of St. Anthony*: called by that name it is no longer open to the criticism of Ducamp, 'that it has no progressive movement.' If we are not invited by the title to expect movement and progress, we can enjoy without being disturbed by unfulfilled expectations the words and gorgeous phrases that pass 'like a glorious roll of drums, through the triumph of his dream.' It is one of Flaubert's curious obstinacies that when he had once fixed on a title he could not change it. He formed the idea of writing a *Temptation of St. Anthony* and a *Sentimental Education*, early in life; and though the works eventually published under these titles differed widely in scope from those

originally planned, the titles remained, to the confusion of the reader and the delight of the malignant critics ; even *Salammbô* and *Madame Bovary* might be named with closer reference to their respective subjects, while *Bouvard et Pécuchet*, which might be the name of a trading firm, tells us nothing whatever about the contents of the book. *The Story of a Simple Soul*, and *St. Julian the Hospitable*, are alone well named : the third of the short stories might as well be entitled Herod Antipas, or John the Baptist, as Herodias.

In spite of these defects the *St. Anthony* remains the work of a giant ; certain thoughts are too big for the ordinary forms of art, certain messages have to be conveyed through the minds of great men in unfamiliar, incongruous forms. Shakespeare had to be disburdened of Lear, Goethe of Faust. Let us take what these men have given us and be thankful.

Criticism is not always an infallible business. Ducamp and Bouilhet alike failed to observe that, in the first *St. Anthony*, the pig, who was introduced to be tempted by pride and convinced that he would become a wild boar, was a confusion. It was *St. Anthony of Padua*, not *St. Anthony of Egypt*, whose holiness was enhanced by the faithful companionship of this delectable animal.

The work was inspired by Alfred le Poittevin. In the long scene with the Devil we trace the influence of those long hours of metaphysical discussion with him ; and when it was published in 1876 it was dedicated to his memory, twenty-eight years after his death. Flaubert's affections were permanent.

The result of the adverse judgment of the friends was, that Flaubert determined to write a story in which his irrepressible lyrical tendency should find no possible outlet. Bouilhet suggested, the day after the reading of *St. Anthony*



was over: 'Why should you not write the story of Delaunay?' The story of Delaunay is the story of *Madame Bovary*; Delaunay had been a pupil of Dr. Flaubert, had acquired a country practice near Rouen, and had been the victim of a worthless wife. This story Flaubert expanded into *Madame Bovary*; and again by an infelicitous title restricted the attention of the reader to what is merely an important episode in his work; diverting him from perceiving the width of its scope.

## CHAPTER X

### THE EAST

ON Monday, October 29th 1849, Flaubert started from Paris for his long-anticipated Eastern tour. He was accompanied by Ducamp, who carried a quantity of the then clumsy photographic apparatus; and by a servant—a Corsican named Sassetti—who proved altogether satisfactory. His health had been unsatisfactory again for the previous year; and we cannot sufficiently admire the devotion of Ducamp, who took this responsibility upon himself—the more so, that his task was often made extremely depressing by Flaubert's home-sickness. He appeared to Ducamp not to be enjoying the tour in the least; not to be observing; and then at times there were those stupendous jokes. But though on the Nile Flaubert talked of the Seine, as on the Seine he talked of the Nile, his letters prove that he was really keenly observing and delighting in the long-dreamed-of East.

Extracts from his letters will show the way in which the journey was affecting him; also the care with which he patiently collected materials for the great Oriental romance which he had long been meditating.

#### TO HIS MOTHER.

'MALTA. *Wednesday night, 7-8 November.*

'Know you one thing, poor dear old woman, one splendid fact. I have not been sea-sick. Not a bit (except on leaving

Marseilles, where I got rid of a glass of rum, which I had swallowed to give me courage). Otherwise during the whole of the crossing, that is to say from Sunday morning to this evening, I have been one of the sauciest, if not the most saucy of the passengers. It has not been the same with Maxime and Sasseti, who have shot a sufficient number of cats. As for me! walks on the deck, dinners with the officers, or I stand on the bridge between the two paddle-boxes in the company of the Captain, where I parade myself in piratical attitudes, my cap on one side, my cigar in my beak. I take lessons in navigation, in manœuvring, etc. In the evening I gaze at the waves, and meditate, draped in my cloak, like Childe Harold. In short I am the real card. I do not know what is the matter with me, but I am adored on board. The gentlemen call me Father Flaubert, so imposing, as it appears, is my mug upon the briny. You see, poor old woman, all is well and the start is good; but don't go and think that the sea has been calm; on the contrary, the weather has been a bit rough, the east wind delayed us twelve hours.'

The first sight of the East at Alexandria is thus described :—

'When we were two hours from the coast of Egypt I went up on to the fore lookout with the boatswain, and saw the seraglio of Abbas Pacha like a black dome on the blue sea. The sun beat upon it. I saw the East through, or rather in, a great silvery light pouring on the sea. Soon the outline of the shore was discerned, and the first thing we saw on land were two camels led by a driver, and then all along the quay worthy Arabs, who were fishing with lines in the most peaceful manner in the world.

'Disembarking was a scene of the most bewildering uproar. Negroes, negresses, camels, turbans, whacks dealt right and left with guttural cries fit to rend one's ears. I snatch myself a bellyful of colours, as an ass fills itself with oats. The stick plays a big part here; everybody, who wears a respectable coat, thwacks everyone, who wears a dirty coat; when I say coat, I should say breeches. Numbers of gentlemen are to be seen wandering about the streets with nothing on but a shirt and a

long pipe. All the women except those of the lowest class are veiled, with ornaments on their noses, which hang and swing like those on horses' bridles. On the other hand if the face is not seen, the whole bosom is exposed. Modesty, changing country, changes place, like a muddled traveller who rides now on the imperial, now inside.

'You see that all is going well, poor mother. We are covered with flannel from head to foot. Spirits and health are alike good. Maxime watches me, and waits on me as though I were a child. I believe he would put me under a glass case if he could, for fear something may happen to me.'

TO LOUIS BOUILHET.

'CAIRO. *December 1st, 1849.*

'I begin, my dear old man, with a kiss for your good head, and with breathing on to this paper all the inspiration which can make your mind come to meet me. For the rest I believe, that you must be thinking awfully much of us, for we think awfully much of you, and miss you a hundred times a day. At the present moment the moon sparkles on the minarets, all is silent. From time to time there is a barking of dogs; in front of my window, whose curtains are drawn, I have in the garden a black mass of trees, seen in the pale brilliancy of the night. I am writing at a square table covered with a green cloth, by the light of two candles, and taking my ink from a pomatum pot. I hear the young Maxime behind the partition messing with his photography; above, the mutes are sleeping, that is to say Sassetti and the dragoman, which aforesaid dragoman is, to say the truth, one of the most arrant ruffians one could mention.

'As for my Excellency, it is clothed in a great Nubian shirt in white cotton ornamented with tufts, and of a cut which it would take long to describe. My head is completely bare, saving a lock on the back of it (it is by this that Mahomed is to lift you on the Day of Judgment) and covered with a red tarbouche, which simply crackles with scarlet, and for the first few days made me crack with heat. We have fairly Oriental mugs. . . . And you, poor beloved old sinner, what are you doing in that dirty Fatherland, tenderly dreaming of which I sometimes surprise myself? I think of our Sundays at Croisset, when I



used to hear the noise of the iron gate, and to see the stick appear, the portfolio and yourself. . . . When shall we resume those endless talks at the corner of the fire, sunk in my green arm-chairs? . . . How is Melænis getting on?

‘In one word here is my epitome of what I have felt up to this point: little surprise at nature, in the way of landscape, sky and desert (except the mirage); prodigious amazement at the towns and the men. Hugo would say: “I was nearer to God than to humanity.” That doubtless has to do with the fact that I had dreamed, studied, and imagined more what has to do with horizons, verdure, sand, trees, sun, than houses, streets, customs and usages. Nature has been to me something recovered, the rest something found. But there is a fresh element, which I did not expect to see here, and which is immense, that is the grotesque. All the old comedy is here of the bethwacked slave, the crusty seller of women, the rascally merchant: very young, very true, charming. . . . One of the finest things is the camel. I am never tired of seeing this strange animal pass, which struts like a turkey, and swings its neck like a swan. They have a cry which I wear myself out with trying to reproduce; I hope to bring it back with me, but it is difficult because of a certain gurgling, which vibrates at the end of the rattle that they utter.’

Like all other European travellers Flaubert visited the Pyramids, and was fairly terrified by the first apparition of the Sphinx; but he was not content with the sights which ordinarily attract Europeans; he would know the East more intimately: dined in Turkish restaurants, where people eat with their fingers, men and animals make themselves completely at home, and, from time to time, some one stands up and says his prayers; learned the names of foods and perfumes, experimented rashly in some of the latter,—all with a view to future literary uses.

‘To come back to the life that we lead here, I had a splendid afternoon some days back. Maxime had remained busy over something. I took Hassan (the second dragoman, whom we have temporarily engaged) and made my way to the Coptic

bishop to have a talk with him. I went into a square court surrounded with columns, in the middle of which there was a little garden, that is to say, some large trees, beds of dark greenery, whose border was formed by a divan in trellised wood. My dragoman with his wide drawers and big-sleeved jacket walked in front, I behind. On one of the corners of the divan was seated an old long-robe with a repellent expression, a white beard, in a great mantle, and surrounded with books in a strange handwriting scattered on all sides. At a certain distance stood three doctors in black robes, younger, and with black beards. The dragoman said : "Here is a French nobleman who is travelling all over the world to learn, and who comes to you to talk of your religion." (That is the style in which we treat one another. Imagine the phrases that I invent. . . .) Well, to return to the bishop. He received me with much ceremony ; coffee was brought, and soon I began to put questions to him touching the Trinity, the Virgin, the Gospels, the Eucharist ; all my old lore of the *St. Anthony* rose like a wave in me.

'It was superb, the blue sky over our heads, the trees, the open books, the old fellow ruminating in his beard to find me answers, I beside him, my legs crossed, gesticulating with my pencil, and taking notes, while Hassan stood up immoveable translating *viva voce*, and the three other doctors seated on stools gave opinions with their heads, and from time to time interpreted a few words. I thoroughly enjoyed it. That was the real East, the land of religion, and ample costumes. When the bishop had been floored, one of the doctors took his place, and when at last I saw that they all had signs of inflammation in the cheeks, I went out. I shall go back, for there is much to be learned there. The Coptic religion is the most ancient Christian sect there is, and hardly anything is known of it in Europe, not to say nothing (as far as I know). I shall go in the same way to see the Armenians, the Greeks, the Sunnites, and above all the Mussulman doctors.'

Since that time more has been learned of the Coptic religion.

'In Europe people imagine the Arab race to be very grave

here it is very gay, very artistic in its gesticulations, and its ornaments. Circumcisions and marriages are merely so many pretexts for rejoicings and music. It is on those days that is heard in the streets the strident clucking of the Arab women, who, packed up in veils, with their elbows spread, resemble, on their donkeys, black full moons advancing on something indescribable with four legs. . . . For one who observes things with some attention more is to be re-found here, than found. A thousand notions, that one had in a state of germ inside one, grow and become definite like a renewed reminiscence. Accordingly as soon as I disembarked at Alexandria I saw advancing towards me in full life the anatomy of the Egyptian sculptures, the high shoulders, long chests, thin legs, and so forth. The dances, that we have had danced for our benefit, have too hieratic a character not to come from the dances of the old East, which is always young, because nothing in it changes. The Bible is here a picture of contemporary manners. Do you know that only a few years ago the murderer of an ox was still punished with death, as in the days of Apis? . . . It is almost impossible but that in a short time from now England will become the mistress of Egypt: she already has Aden filled with troops. The transit of Suez will be very convenient to bring you the redcoats to Cairo one fine morning. We shall hear of it in France a fortnight later, and we shall be very much astonished. Remember my prediction. On the first movement in Europe England will take Egypt, Russia Constantinople, and we, by way of reprisal, will go and get ourselves shot in the mountains of Syria.'

TO LOUIS BOUILHET.

'CAIRO. *January 15, 1850.*

'When we meet again many days will have passed, I mean many things. Shall we be still the same? Will there be no change in the communion of our beings? I have too much pride in ourselves not to think so. Work on—remain what you are. Continue your disgusting and sublime way of earning a livelihood, and then we will see about making the skin of those drums sound, which we have long been keeping stretched so tight. . . . The second pyramid has its summit all white with

the dung of eagles and vultures, who endlessly float around the tops of these monuments, which recalled to me the following from *St. Anthony*: "The gods with ibis'-heads have their shoulders whitened by the dung of birds." Maxime kept repeating: "I saw the Sphinx fleeing in the direction of Libya. It ran like a jackal."

'The other day I took a bath. I was alone in the recesses of the hot room watching the light fall through the glass openings in the dome. Warm water ran everywhere; stretched out like a calf I thought of a heap of things; all my pores quickly expanded. It is very voluptuous, and there is a certain chastened melancholy in thus taking a bath all alone, lost in these dim halls, where the least noise sounds like a cannon shot, while the naked kellaks call to one another, and turn you and twist you like embalmers arranging you for the tomb.

'By means of bakshish (bakshish and whacks are the basis of the Arab, nothing else is understood, and nothing else is seen) we have been initiated.

'Serpents were placed around our necks and hands; incantations recited over our heads; they breathed into our mouths; it was very amusing. The men who exercise such culpable industries execute their vile juggleries, as M. de Voltaire used to say, with singular skill. . . . We argue with priests of all religions. It is sometimes really splendid in the way of poses and attitudes. We have translations made us of songs, stories, traditions, everything that is most popular and oriental. We employ learned men—literally. We have our fine touches, heaps of impudence, enormous liberty of language. The proprietor of our hotel even finds that at times we go a little too far. One of these days we are going to visit some sorcerers. All with a view to those old aims.'

TO HIS MOTHER.

'CAIRO. February 3rd, 1850.

'I have caught a bad cold by staying five hours upright on a wall to see the ceremony of the Danseh. This is what it is: the word "danseh" means "trampling," and never was a name better given. It has to do with a man, who passes on horse-back over several others crouched on the ground like dogs. At



certain epochs of the year this festival is repeated only at Cairo in memory of, and to renew the miracle of, a certain holy Mussulman, who once entered Cairo marching thus on horseback over earthen vessels without breaking them. The sheik, who repeats this ceremony, should wound the men no more than the saint broke the earthen vessels. If the men die of it, their sins are the cause. I saw dervishes there, who had iron spits passed through their mouths, and their chests. Oranges were spitted at the two ends of the iron rods. The crowd of the faithful howled with enthusiasm ; to that you must join music savage enough to drive one mad. When the sheik appeared on horseback, my gentlemen laid themselves on the ground with their heads down ; they were put in rows like herrings, and heaped close to one another, so that there should be no interval between the bodies. A man walked over them to see if the platform of humanity was firm and close, and then to clear the course, a hail, a tempest, a hurricane of whacks administered by eunuchs began to rain right and left at random, on whatever happened to be there. We were perched on a wall, Sasseti and Joseph at our feet. We stayed there from eleven till nearly four. It was very cold, and we had hardly room to stir, so great was the crowd, and so small the place we had taken ; but it was a very good one and nothing escaped us. We heard the palm sticks sound dully on the tarbouches like the drumsticks on drums full of tow, or rather on balls of wool. This is exact. The sheik advanced, his horse held by two attendants, and himself supported by two others ; and the good gentleman needed it. His hands began to tremble, a nervous attack seized him, and at the end of his parade, he was almost unconscious. His horse passed at a slow walk over the bodies of more than two hundred men lying flat on their stomachs. As for how many died of it, it is impossible to know anything about them ; the crowd pours in behind the sheik in such a way, when once he has passed, that it is no easier to know what has become of these unfortunates, than to make out the fate of a pin thrown into a torrent. The evening before we had been in a convent of dervishes, where we had seen some of them fall in convulsions by dint of crying Allah ! These are gay sights, and would have made M. de Voltaire

laugh hugely. What reflections would he not have made on the poor human mind ! fanaticism ! superstition ! It did not make me laugh at all. It is too interesting to be terrifying. What is most terrible is their music.'

On the sixth of February the friends started up the Nile ; these were the days before Cook ; travelling was slower but more independent, and the crew of your boat were always at hand to afford opportunities for enjoying the grotesque. Other travellers have described the Nile, with its shores more like ocean-strands than the banks of a river ; its crocodiles, storks and distant chain of Arabian mountains ; though Flaubert's descriptions bear his own distinctive stamp—sudden transitions from the elevated to the vulgar, from the sublime to the obscene—there is not much with which we are not already familiar. On the way down, at Wadi-Halfa, the travellers made the acquaintance of the Governor of Ibrim, charged with collecting the taxes in the whole province.

'That is not a light task. It is executed with plentiful relays of thwacks, arrests, and imprisonments. We came down side by side with him for three days. A villager had refused to pay, the sheik put him in chains, and carried him off in his boat. When he passed near us, we saw the poor old fellow at the bottom of the boat, bareheaded and duly padlocked ; on the shore men and women followed shouting. That did not in the least flurry our good Turk, who, however, thought it prudent not to let us get out of sight, hoping that, if by any chance he were attacked, we had some good guns which would carry far. He came to make calls on us, while descending the Nile like ourselves. Once he brought us a present of a small sheep, which was distinctly agreeable to us, for we had eaten nothing but chicken and turtle doves for six weeks. We had conversations with this excellent fellow upon his speciality, that is to say, he gave us numbers of details upon the method of killing a man with whacks in a fixed number of blows ; they explain all that to you very elegantly, laughing, as we talk of the

theatre, and carry it into execution very placidly, as a man smokes a pipe.'

On the way down the Nile an expedition was made across the desert to Kosseir; the travellers had a longing to contemplate the Red Sea. On this expedition an event occurred, which is not mentioned in Flaubert's correspondence, but of which Ducamp gives the following account:—

'During this excursion the only painful incident between Flaubert and myself took place; we remained forty-eight hours without speaking to one another. (The evening after their departure from Kosseir a camel carrying all their supply of water had fallen, and burst all the skins. They were two days and a half from the nearest wells on the return journey; but imprudently instead of turning back, trusted to the chance of meeting other travellers, and borrowing. In this they were disappointed.) After suffering thirst for thirty-six hours, while we were passing through a defile, a furnace, formed of granite rocks, of a rose colour, covered with inscriptions, Flaubert said to me: "Do you remember the lemon ices that one eats at Tortoni's?" I made a sign of the head in the affirmative. He resumed: "Lemon ice is a superior article; admit that you would not be annoyed at having to swallow a lemon ice." Roughly enough I replied: "Yes." After an interval of five minutes: "Ah! the lemon ices! All around the glass there is a cloud, which is like a white jelly." I said: "Suppose we were to change the conversation?" He replied: "That would be better, but lemon ice is worthy of being celebrated: one fills the spoon, it makes a little mound, one softly squeezes it between the tongue and the palate; it melts slowly, coolly, deliciously; it bathes the uvula, glides over the tonsils, descends into the gullet, which is only too happy, and it falls into the stomach which bursts with laughing, so delighted is it. Between you and me there is a scarcity of lemon ices in the desert of Kosseir!"

'I knew Gustave. I knew that nothing could stop him, when he was a prey to one of these possessions, and I made no answer, in the hope that my silence would make him hold his

tongue. It was no use, he began again, and seeing that I said nothing, he began to shout: "Lemon ice! Lemon ice!" I could not stand it any longer; a horrible thought shook me. I said to myself: "I shall kill him." I drove my dromedary on, so as to touch him, I took him by the arm: "Where do you wish to be, in front or behind?" He replied: "I will go in front." I stopped my dromedary, and when our little troop was two hundred yards in front of me, I resumed my march. In the evening I left Flaubert in the middle of our men, and I went and prepared my bed in the sand more than two hundred yards from the camp. At three o'clock in the morning we started at the same distance from one another, and without having exchanged a word. Towards three o'clock in the afternoon the dromedaries lengthened their pace, and showed signs of agitation; water was not far off; at half past three we were at Bir Amber, and we had drunk. Flaubert took me in his arms and said: "I thank you for not having blown out my brains with your gun; in your place I should not have resisted."

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Poor Ducamp suffered in a less violent degree during their stay at Cairo from a French doctor living there, who wrote execrable tragedies. The man's vanity enraptured Flaubert, who was never tired of complimenting him on his poems, and encouraging him to recite them. The unfortunate Ducamp had to listen to it all. But there were other jokes, which both enjoyed equally. Writing to his mother from near Cairo on the return journey, Flaubert says:—

'As for Maxime and myself, we were never less bored on the boat, although we have nothing more to do or see. We have books, and we don't read. No more do we write. We pass nearly all our time in doing the "sheicks," that is to say the old men; (the sheick is the old gentleman, foolish, retired, respected, in a very good position, behind the age); and in asking one another questions in the style of the same:

'"And is there a little society in the towns that you passed through? Had you any club where the papers are read?"



"Is the railway movement being felt at all? Is there any main line?"

"And as I hope, God be thanked, socialist doctrines have not yet penetrated to those shores?"

"Is there at least good wine? Have you any celebrated vintages?"

"Are the ladies agreeable?"

"Are there any good cafés? Do the shop ladies assume an expensive style?"

'All this in a trembling voice, and with an imbecile air. From the sheick simple we arrived at the double sheick, that is to say at dialogue. Thereupon dialogues on everything that happens in the world, and with good old crusted opinions. Then the sheick has aged, and has become the old palsied man, riddled with infirmities, and talking endlessly of his meals and his digestion. Here Maxime has developed a great talent for mimicry. He has a nephew who is a magistrate's clerk, a maid who is called Marianne. He is called père Etienne, me he calls Quarafon (Juggins—carafe). The name "Quarafon" is sublime.

'We walk about mutually supporting one another and slobbering. He tells me a hundred times a day to write to his nephew the clerk to tell him to come because "he does not feel well," and as we are overdone with chicken, whenever I bewail myself, he says to me: "Come, Quarafon, cheer up, you shall have a good chicken for dinner: I told Marianne to do one for you." In the evening it takes us half an hour to get to bed. We moan and groan and turn ourselves heavily like people overwhelmed with rheumatism. "Come then, good night, my friend, good night." A few days ago I was just getting to sleep when I felt a weight pressing on my back, it was père Etienne, who was coming to sleep with me, because he was afraid of being all alone in his own bed. Sometimes, too, there are hot disputes, wherein père Etienne takes advantage of his superiority in the matter of age, and Quarafon declares that he will take the coach next week.'

Avoiding the overland route to Syria as unnecessarily dull and long, the travellers went by sea to Beyrout and

thence to Jerusalem. Flaubert experienced the usual disillusionment with regard to the 'holy places,' but was enraptured with the scenery.

Writing to Bouilhet from Damascus, he discusses at great length many literary questions. Among other things, he says :—

'You do well to think of the *Dictionary of Accepted Opinions*. That book, done completely, and preceded by a good preface, in which one would point out how the work has been written with the object of attaching the public to tradition, order, general conventionalities, and arranged in such a way that the reader would not know whether you were laughing at him or not, would perhaps be a strange book, and capable of succeeding, for it would be all real.

'I read at Jerusalem a Socialist book (*Essay on Positive Philosophy*, by Auguste Comte). It was lent to me by a wild Catholic who insisted by main force that I should read it in order to see, etc. etc. I turned over some pages of it; it is consumingly stupid, and indeed I was not mistaken. There are in it immense mines of comedy, quite a California of the grotesque. There is perhaps something else as well. That may be. One of the first studies to which I shall betake myself on my return, will certainly be that of all these deplorable Utopias, which agitate our society, and threaten to cover it with ruins. Why not accommodate ourselves to the conditions which are submitted to us? They are as good as any other; to take things impartially, few have been more fertile. Folly consists in the wish for finality. We say to ourselves: "But our foundation is not fixed, which of the two will be right?" I see a past in ruins, and a future in germs, the one is too old, the other is too young. All is confused. But that is not understanding the twilight. That is to wish for midnight or midday only. What does the face that to-morrow will bear, matter; we only see the face of to-day. It cuts hideous mugs truly, and therefore enters the better into romanticism.

'When has the middle-class man been more gigantic than now? What is Molière's Bourgeois in comparison with him?

M. Jourdain does not come up to the level of the first tradesman you meet in the street ; and the envious phiz of the artisan ? and the pushing young man ? and the magistrate ! And all that is fermenting in fools' brains, and boiling in the hearts of sharpers !

‘Yes, stupidity consists in wishing to be final. We are a thread, and we wish to know the woof. That is the reason of these eternal discussions on the decay of art. People spend their time now in saying : “We are quite done, here we are at the last limit, etc. etc..” What strong mind has ever brought things to an end ? To begin with, Homer ? Let us enjoy the picture, it is good, too.’

At Nazareth Flaubert went to see the lepers, and many years later turned what he saw there to good account in *St. Julian the Hospitable*.

At this period plans were changed ; it had been originally proposed to continue the journey yet further East, to visit Mesopotamia, Persia, possibly India ; but on the return visit to Beyrout, Ducamp received a letter from Mme. Flaubert imploring him to return, as also did her son. Ducamp, to whom the further journey meant much, most unselfishly sacrificed himself to the wishes of the mother and the son ; though he felt with justice that they should have counted the cost of the longer tour to begin with. The moment his feet were turned homewards, Flaubert began to regret the places that he should never see.

In Syria Flaubert found an unheard-of collection of all the old religions ; people in Lebanon still adoring the cedars as in the days of the prophets. With the cedars themselves he was disappointed,—they were too old and too few ; but the scenery was as fine as the Pyrenees, and under an Oriental sun,

There lived in close intimacy with the Flaubert family ‘Uncle Parain.’ He had married the sister of Dr. Flaubert,

and therefore was not a blood relation. For Gustave he had a strong love, and deep admiration, making the young man his friend, as the following extracts from a letter written during quarantine at Rhodes abundantly prove:—

‘You are very wrong, my good old friend, not to write to me oftener, for I assure you that your letters are real “days out” for me. The last made me laugh heartily, and what you tell me of all your acquaintances has amused me not a little. That would be something to talk over at full length by the fireside, with our noses under the chimney-piece and our feet in our slippers. That is what I propose to myself on my return. What a spree we will give ourselves with the bellows! It will be necessary to put a spring to them.

‘It seems that the young Bouilhet betakes himself somewhat to immorality in my absence. You see him too often. You demoralise that young man. If I were his mother, I should forbid him your society. There is nothing so bad for youth as the company of debauched old men. Nevertheless continue, my good friends, to drink a glass to my health when you meet. Even fuddle yourselves in my honour. I pardon you by anticipation.’

‘Have you ever reflected, dear old comrade, on all the serenity of fools? Stupidity is something unshakeable, nothing attacks it, without being crushed upon it. It is of the nature of granite, hard and resistant. At Alexandria one Thompson, of Sunderland has written his name in letters six feet high on Pompey’s Pillar. It can be read three quarters of a mile off. There is no possibility of seeing the column without seeing the name of Thompson, and consequently, without thinking of Thompson. This idiot has embodied himself in the monument, and perpetuates himself with it. What do I say? He annihilates it under the splendour of his majestic letters. Is it not coming it rather strong to force future travellers to think of you, and remember you? All fools are more or less Thompsons of Sunderland. In the course of one’s life, how many of them one meets in its most beautiful places, on its purest angles? And then it is they who always annihilate us; they are so numerous, so happy, they return so often, they



are so healthy. Travelling one meets numbers of them, and we have already a fine collection in our memories ; but as they pass quickly they simply amuse us. It is not so in ordinary life, when they end by making you savage.'

At Constantinople Flaubert received a letter from his mother concerning the little niece, who was now coming to an age when her education demanded forethought. Gustave's reply is worth noting :—

'There are many things in the world, poor old woman, of which you in your perfect honesty are ignorant. I who am becoming a very great moralist, and who besides have always plunged myself headlong into this kind of study, have lifted not a few curtain-corners which concealed countless turpitudes. Women are taught to lie in an infamous fashion. Their apprenticeship lasts all their life from the first lady's maid they are given, to the last lover who comes upon them ; each and all take pains to make them base, and then cry out against them ; puritanism, prudery, bigotry, the system of seclusion, of narrowness, have spoiled their nature, and destroy the most charming creations of God in their bloom. I fear the moral corset—that is all. First impressions are not effaced, you know. We carry our past with us ; the whole of our life we smell of the nurse. When I analyse myself I find still fresh in me, and with all their influences (modified, it is true, by their mutual combination), the places of père Langlois, of père Mignot, of Don Quixote, and my childhood's reveries in the garden beside the window of the lecture room. In short : get some one to teach her English, and the first general elements. Give all the attention that you can to that yourself, and watch over the character and good sense (I give the word its widest meaning) of the person you select.'

There are a large number of people whose interest in their acquaintance begins and ends with projects matrimonial, and marriage is indeed an important part of life ; it is not, however, the whole of life. Flaubert's views on the subject at

this period, December 1850, were as follows. He is writing to his mother :—

‘And when is my wedding to be? When? You ask me that in connection with Ernest’s marriage. Never, I hope. So far as a man can answer for what he will do, I reply here in the negative. The contact of the world, with which I have rubbed shoulders pretty closely for the last fourteen months, makes me retire further and further into my shell. Uncle Parain is mistaken when he affirms that travelling changes people; as for me, such as I started, such I return, only with some hairs fewer on the outside of my head, and many more landscapes inside. That is all! As for my moral dispositions, I keep the same till further orders; and then, if it were necessary to reveal the very bottom of my thoughts, and if the expression were not in appearance too presumptuous, I should say, that I am too old to change. I have passed the age. When a man has lived, as I have, an inner life full of turbulent analysis, and repressed impulses, when he has thus in turn excited and calmed himself, and when he has spent his whole youth in making his soul wheel and turn, as a rider his horse, which he forces with the spur to gallop across the fields, to walk slowly, to jump the ditches, to trot, to canter, the whole simply to amuse himself, and learn more; well, I would say, if he has not broken his neck at the start, there is a very good chance that he will not break it later on. I too, I am established, in the sense that I have found my position, a centre of gravity. I do not presume that any internal shock can make me change my place and fall on the ground. Marriage would be for me a horrible apostasy. Alfred’s death has not effaced the recollection of the irritation that his marriage caused me. It was what the news of a great scandal caused by a bishop would be to the devout. When a man wishes, be he small or great, to concern himself with the works of God, he must begin, if only from considerations of health, by putting himself in a position in which he cannot be duped by them. You may paint a picture of wine, love, women, glory, on condition, my good friend, that you are neither a drunkard, nor a lover, nor a husband, nor a soldier-boy. When a man is mixed with life, he

sees it all, he suffers too much from it, or enjoys it too much. In my opinion the artist is a monstrosity, something outside nature, all the misfortunes with which Providence overwhelms him, come to him from his persistence in denying this axiom ; he suffers from it, and makes others suffer. On that point question women who have loved poets, and men who have loved actresses. Now (and this is the conclusion) I am resigned to living, as I have lived, alone with a crowd of great men, who take the place of a club to me, with my bear-skin, being a bear myself, etc. I don't care a snap for the world, the future, the what-will-people-say, for any establishment whatever, even for a literary reputation, which has made me pass so many sleepless nights in dreaming before now. That is what I am, that is my character.

'If, for instance, I know what has made me reel off this couple of pages, poor dear old woman, may the devil fly away with me ! No, no—when I think of your good face, so sad, so loving, of the pleasure that I have in living with you, so full of calm, so delightful, so grave, I see clearly that I shall never love another woman, as I love you. There—you will never have a rival ; don't be afraid ! The senses, a passing fancy, will not take the place of that which remains enclosed in the recesses of a triple sanctuary. They may perhaps get as far as the threshold of the temple, but they will never enter in.'

Thereupon follows a rather unkind disquisition on poor Ernest Chevalier, who is on the point of committing the crime of matrimony. When his friends married, Flaubert lost his head ; the subject was as annoying to him as to Queen Elizabeth ; and he was apt to express himself in language whose strength and unfairness were alike worthy of that austere virgin.

After leaving Constantinople, Flaubert writes to Bouilhet :—

'The East will soon be nothing but a question of sun. At Constantinople most of the men are dressed in the European fashion, operas are played, there are reading rooms, milliners' shops, etc. A hundred years hence the harem, gradually

invaded by intercourse with Frankish ladies, will crumble to dust of itself under the leading article and the comic opera. . . . Soon the veil, already slighter and slighter, will pass from the faces of the women, and with it Moslemism will fly away altogether. The number of pilgrims to Mecca diminishes day by day; the ulemas fuddle themselves like vergers. Voltaire is talked of! Everything here is breaking up, as with us. He who lives longest will laugh most!’

At Athens the following scene occurred :—

‘The other day we had beside us at table a band of midshipmen from the English navy, from nine to fourteen years old, who came calmly, like grown men, to give themselves a spree at the hotel; with their uniforms too big for them there could be nothing more amusing, more exquisite. The smallest, sitting by Maxime, and who was not higher than the table, lost his long nose in his plate. These gentlemen toasted one another with the dignity of Lords. They smoked cigars and drank Marsala. My face interested them much; they took me for a Turk. They told the proprietor of the hotel that they were very sorry to be going away the next day, as otherwise they would have come to pay me a visit, to have a talk with me.’

Middies of nine years old are rather a startling phenomenon; but this was in the pre-Britannia days.

As Flaubert approached home, the practice of moralising grew upon him. He says, in writing to his mother from Patras :—

‘The saddest thing of all is one day to become aware of the collapse of an old friendship. Thanks to former sympathies, one had faith in a community of sentiment, which no longer exists. One used to say to oneself: “When I need him, he will come to help me.” One calls, the friendly ear no longer understands your language. From one man to another, from one woman to another woman, from heart to heart, what gulfs! The distance from one continent to another is nothing in comparison. Do I want you to throw yourself into the water if I fall in? Or to defend me against assassins? I can swim, and there are no assassins now. Sacrifices are not what the heart demands, but



confidences. I ask you to love as I love, to weep as I weep, and over the same things, to feel as I feel, that is all. There is nothing more futile than those heroic friendships, which require events to prove them. The difficulty is to find someone who does not torture your nerves in the ordinary occurrences of life.'

Perhaps Maxime Ducamp might have found something to say on this subject, for—

'I am now working hard at doing the howling dervish. Francis (the dragoman) gives me lessons as we ride. Maxime is nearly bored to death; none the less I go on. One evening I literally got broken winded over it, and in the house where we were sleeping, everybody came to the door to see what was the matter. The sheick still goes on; it is a healthy creation, which time does not exhaust.'

Maxime, however, had his turn every now and then :—

'As for me, my hair is going; when you see me again I shall be wearing a skull-cap; I shall have the baldness of the office clerk, of the worn-out notary, of all that is most inane in the way of premature senility. I am quite miserable over it. Maxime laughs at me, he may be right. It is a feminine sentiment, unworthy of a man, and a republican, I know; but I feel in this the first symptom of a decadence which humiliates me, and of which I am only too well aware. I am getting fat. I am putting on a stomach, and beginning to be loathsome. Perhaps soon I shall be regretting my youth, and like Béranger's grandmother, my lost time. Where are ye, blooming locks of my eighteen years, ye who fell upon my shoulders with such hope, such pride?'

By the time that Flaubert reached Rome, he had got over his irritation at Ernest's marriage, and wrote him a pleasant enough letter of congratulation :—

'I think that you have taken the right road, be it said between ourselves, and without complimenting you, and that I—well, not that I have taken the wrong road, but that the wrong road has taken me (my philosophical opinions not permitting me, as the "garçon" would say, to recognise that there was any liberty or freedom of choice in the matter). . . .

'Ah, when we were howling on that poor billiard table at the

Infirmity converted into a stage of which you provided the scenery, who would have told us that to-day I should be at Rome, that I should be coming out of St. Peter's at four o'clock in the afternoon, and that I should write to you? Who would further have told us that I should be bald, for you will see me again with my head nearly bare? In that I resemble Julius Cæsar and a pumpkin, for I have become enormously fat in the East. . . . Whatever may happen to you hereafter, remember, dear old man, that you have over there on the edge of the water, between the hillside and the river, an ear always open to confidences, a friendly hand that would not fail you, and a devotion which may be old, but is not aged.'

Rome impressed Flaubert, as it has impressed many others. We go there most of us expecting to walk where Horace walked, to stroll under the same porticos, to saunter in the halls of the same baths, possibly to stroll in the Campus Martius and watch the young men playing ball. We find that the Rome of Cicero, of Horace, of Virgil, even of Domitian, Aurelian, is the property of the antiquary, and not of the ordinary traveller. Except the Pantheon, there are no buildings at Rome which we see at all as the subjects of Augustus saw them, and even that, how changed! A walk along the Roman Wall in England tells us as much, if not more, of imperial Rome than a drive along the Via Appia. On the other hand, mediæval Rome—the Rome of the Popes, the Rome of the Renaissance—meets us at every turn; though even that is much shorn of its splendours since 1870. Two things attracted Flaubert at Rome, the statuary and the pictures,—the masterpieces of ancient art, and of the age of the Renaissance. St Peter's seemed to him to have the cold unsympathetic magnificence of a new tomb; but he admits that the Parthenon had spoiled him for most things in the way of building.

By May he was again home. In the summer the family visited England; it was the year of the first Exhibition.

## CHAPTER XI

### LIFE AT CROISSET—MADAME LOUISE COLET

FROM the autumn of 1851 to his death in the spring of 1880 Flaubert's life was spent almost without interruption at Croisset, in the laborious construction of his books. At the time of the publication of *Madame Bovary* he passed some months in Paris, and afterwards occasionally resided there for the winter months, especially when needing access to libraries more complete than those of Rouen, or when the plays of Louis Bouilhet were being rehearsed. In 1860 he again made a short visit to the East, this time to the site of ancient Carthage, in order to fix certain details for *Salammbô*. In 1870-71 he abandoned his house to the Prussians, who were quartered on him ; twice he accompanied his mother to Vichy. These were the only serious interruptions to the secluded life of literary labour spent in the study at Croisset.

Few men of letters have been so fortunate as Flaubert in their domestic circumstances ; his father had left his widow and children the possession of a moderate fortune ; his mother lived only to secure to her adored son the repose which was absolutely necessary to enable him to realise his artistic ideals.

To the ordinary irritability of the artist, Flaubert added the special weakness left by the breakdown of his nervous

system in 1846. At times his power of hearing became a positive torture to him, and his extremely sensitive ear had in all probability no small share in producing the fastidiousness which made composition in his case so laborious.

Madame Caroline Commanville, Flaubert's niece, whose mother died, as we have seen, at her birth, gives us some very pleasant reminiscences of her uncle's home life at Croisset. She describes the house, built originally somewhere about 1650 as a country residence for the monks of St. Ouen, restored in extremely bad taste in accordance with the artistic prejudices of the First Empire; the garden sloping down to the Seine, its terraces, its avenue of limes, the tulip-tree opposite the study windows. The Abbé Prévost had, for a long period, been the guest of the monks of St. Ouen, and Flaubert flattered himself with the idea that *Manon Lescaut* might have been written at Croisset.

'The habits of the house were subordinated to my uncle's tastes, my grandmother having, so to say, no personal life; she lived in the happiness of her family. Her affection was alarmed by the smallest symptom of ill-health, which she imagined she discovered in her son; her aim was to envelope him in an atmosphere of perfect calm. In the morning it was forbidden to make the smallest noise; towards ten o'clock there was a violent ring; my uncle's room was entered, and then for the first time everyone seemed to wake. The servant brought the letters and papers, put on the table at the bedside a big glass of water, very cold, and a pipe ready filled; he then drew the curtains, and the light poured in. My uncle took up his letters, looked at the address, but rarely opened any of them before having taken several puffs from his pipe, then, still reading, he tapped at the partition to call his mother, who immediately ran in to sit by his bed till he got up.

'He dressed slowly, sometimes stopping to go and read over again some passage in his compositions that interested him. Though far from complicated his dress was never careless, and his ideas of cleanliness were fastidious.



'At eleven o'clock he came down to lunch, where my grandmother, uncle Parain, the governess and myself were already assembled. We were all extremely fond of Uncle Parain; he spent a great part of the year with us. At this time (1852) my uncle ate little, especially in the morning, believing that a full diet produces dullness and indisposition to work; hardly ever any meat; eggs, vegetables, a piece of cheese, or fruit, and a cup of cold chocolate. At dessert, he used to light his pipe, a little clay pipe, get up and go into the garden, whither we followed him. His favourite walk was the terrace under the rocks, shaded on one side by old lime trees cut straight like a great wall. It led to a little summerhouse in the style of Louis xv., whose windows looked upon the Seine. We rarely went to the summerhouse after lunch. Avoiding the midday sun, we used to climb to a spot called "The Mercury," because of a statue of that god, by which it was once ornamented; it was a second avenue situated above the terrace, and to which a charming path led, deeply shaded; old yew trees in strange shapes grew from the rocks, showing the bare roots, and their ruinous trunks. Quite at the top of the path on a sort of circular space, a bench was hidden under chestnut trees. Through their branches the quiet water was seen, and large bits of sky above, from time to time a cloud rapidly disappearing. It was the smoke of a steam-boat; immediately appeared between the tall stems of the trees the pointed masts of ships being towed up to Rouen; often their number was seven or nine. Nothing could be more majestic and beautiful than these processions of floating houses, which spoke to you of distant lands. Towards one o'clock a shrill whistle was heard; it was the "steamer," as the country folks say. Three times a day this boat makes the passage from Rouen to La Bouille.

'The signal for departure had been given.

"Come," my uncle would say, "come to lessons, my Caro," and he, taking me by the hand, we would both go into his large study, where the outer blinds, carefully kept closed, had not allowed the heat to penetrate; it was nice there, one breathed a scent of oriental beads mixed with that of tobacco, and a trace of perfumes coming through the half open door of the dressing room. At one bound I used to fling myself on a great

white bear-skin which I worshipped : I used to cover its great head with kisses. My uncle during this time would put his pipe away on the chimney piece, select another, fill it, light it, then seat himself on a green leather arm-chair at the other end of the room ; he used to cross one leg over the other, lean back, take a file, and polish his nails. "Let us see—are you there ? Well, what do you remember from yesterday ?"—"Oh, I know the story of Pelopidas and Epaminondas quite well." "Tell me then." I would begin, then naturally get confused, or perhaps I had forgotten. "I will tell it you again." I drew near him, and seated in front of him on a low chair, or on the divan, I used to listen with palpitating interest to the stories, which he made so amusing for me.

'In this way he taught me the whole of ancient history, bringing the facts into relation with one another ; making reflections within my grasp, but always preserving truth, depth, in his observations ; mature minds might have listened without discovering anything childish in his instruction. I would sometimes stop him to ask him : "Was he good ?"—and this question applied to such persons as Cambyses, Alexander, or Alcibiades, caused him some embarrassment. "Good . . . come, these were not very particular gentlemen, what have you to do with that ?" But I was not satisfied, and I thought that my "old man" as I called him, ought to have known even the very smallest details of the lives of the persons about whom he was talking to me.

'The history lesson finished, we passed to geography. He would never have permitted me to learn from a book. "Images, as much as possible," he would say, "that is the right way to teach children." So we had cards, globes, games requiring patience, which we made up and pulled to pieces together ; then to explain the difference between an island, a peninsula, a bay, a gulf, a promontory, he would take a bucket and a shovel, and we made models after nature in a path in the garden.

'As I grew up the lessons became longer, more serious ; he continued them to my seventeenth year, to my marriage. When I was ten years old, he made me take notes while he talked, and when my mind was capable of understanding it, he

began to make me observe the artistic side in everything, above all in my reading.

‘Often in the summer evenings we used to sit all together on the balcony, with its graceful carvings; and remained there quiet for hours, hearing him talk; the night would come on little by little, the last passers-by had disappeared; on the towing-path opposite, the outline of a horse would be faintly seen, drawing a barge, which glided on noiselessly; the moon began to shine, and its thousand reflections, like a dust of diamonds, glittered at our feet; a light mist spread over the river, two or three boats put off from the shore. They were eel-fishers, who were starting and shooting their bow-nets—my grandmother, very delicate, would begin to cough, then my uncle would say: “It is time to return to the Bovary.” “The Bovary”—what was it? I did not know. I respected this name, these two words, like everything else that came from my uncle; I had a vague belief that it was the synonym for work, and work, of course, was writing. As a matter of fact, it was during these years, from 1852 to 1856, that he composed this work.’

It is possible to know too much of the intimate life of our great artists; blundering humanity is always asking, like little Caroline Hamard, ‘was he good?’ and has an ideal of its own as to the nature of goodness. One of the first demands that it makes of its artist is that he shall be a ‘good family man.’ And though the facts have shown, over and over again, that the artistic temperament is incompatible with the ordinary conditions of domestic life—that the home has to be made to the artist, and not the artist to the home—our chosen prophets share the fate of Cassandra the moment it is discovered that they are anything short of exemplary at home. That the man of infinitely keen perception will also be the man of delicately sensitive nerves; that the sedentary man will in all probability suffer agonies through the failure of his digestive organs; that

there is little reserve energy left in the man who has just written a chapter requiring close thought, or played a concerto; that the man who can describe in the most forcible language the feelings of others, will also have the gift of describing his own,—all these things, plain, obvious, well-known as they are, count for nothing when an artist is weighed in the balance of public opinion. Carlyle, once the divinity of hydropathic society, the rival of Wordsworth in the Pantheon of the Middle-class—where is he now? It is all very well to have written the *Life of Frederick the Great*, to have whitewashed Cromwell, to have exalted Burns, to have published an autobiography full of comfortable long words, to have adorned it with talk of Baphometric fire-baptism and fuliginosity—the Middle-class has reversed its verdict, since Mr. Froude's indiscretion turned away from its idol, with the remark: 'Carlyle,—oh, that's the chap that bullied his wife; no, I don't read *him*!'

There will be no occasion to cry 'Shame' upon Flaubert in the matter of his domestic relations. Though his letters continually betray the artist's sensitiveness, described with the artist's skill, we know that his irritable nerves never led him to any want of outward respect, or inward consideration, to his mother, or any sharpness to the little girl, whom he patiently taught.

On the other hand, Flaubert's home made itself to him. What his life would have been, had his domesticities been controlled by a wife jealous of his books, or bent on leading a life of her own, it is easy to surmise. Imagine Mrs. Carlyle living in the seclusion of Croisset; forced to submit to those prodigious jokes; to the weekly visits of Louis Bouilhet; to endless withering strictures upon middle-class prejudices, and dearly loved habits; to a husband, who came worn out to bed every morning at four, and did not rise till ten; who



was known throughout the country-side as 'that queer Mr. Gustave'; and who frequently appeared at his window robed in a voluminous dressing-gown, in full sight of passing steamers; who was so tortured by drawing-room conversation, as to experience actual bodily pain from it; who worked noisily, groaning, howling, chanting the newly finished phrases, or even bursting into tears of despair. What a jeremiad she would have bestowed on us!

To his servants Flaubert was an indulgent, and even an affectionate master; his old nurse 'M<sup>am</sup>selle Julie' lived with him all his life, and survived him by two years; it is no exaggeration to say that she worshipped the ground he trod on. When he went to live in Paris, he took with him one 'Narcisse,' who had been a servant of his father's,—retired, married, begotten five or six children, turned cultivator of the soil; he did not, however, hesitate for a moment to leave wife and family, and follow 'M<sup>si</sup>eu Gustave' to Paris. Flaubert's friends used to amuse themselves with the remarks and reports of Narcisse; they used to send him their books to read. He would be found seated in the study, or in front of the bookcase; a feather broom under his arm, a book in his hand; he would be reading aloud at the top of his voice in imitation of his master. On one occasion he came home completely drunk. Flaubert found him seated, or rather collapsed, on a kitchen chair; he helped him to get to his room, and lie down on the bed; then Narcisse, in a supplicating voice said: 'Oh, sir, put the completion on your kindness: pull off my boots for me!' which the indulgent master accordingly did. Lyrics and nips proved, however, too much for Narcisse in the long run, and he was forced to return to the bosom of his family, and cultivation of the soil.

▷ During the period of the composition of *Madame Bovary*

(1852-1856) we see Flaubert chiefly through his correspondence with the Parisian lady, whose acquaintance we have already made. From September 1851 up to April 1854 there are only seven letters to other persons. Bouilhet was living at Rouen during the greater part of this period, so that correspondence with him was superfluous; and a coolness had arisen with Maxime Ducamp. It was not till after the publication of *Madame Bovary* that Flaubert had many correspondents.

The lady in question was a certain Madame Louise Colet, who kept a literary, somewhat Bohemian *salon* in Paris; and this is how she appeared, and how her connection with Flaubert appeared to the cold world. Maxime Ducamp, speaking of the two books, *Elle et Lui* and *Lui et Elle*, which contain the indiscreet revelations of Georges Sand on the one hand, and Paul de Musset on the other, writes as follows:—

‘But what are we to think of Louise Colet, who intervenes, elbowing herself forward, who pushes herself between the author of *Rolla* and the author of *Consuelo*, and who cries triumphantly “Here am I!” It was absolutely necessary that the world should know that Alfred de Musset had had a fancy for a literary woman without talent: Louise Colet undertook to enlighten the world. After *Elle et Lui*, after *Lui et Elle*, Louise Colet published *Lui*. *Lui* is Alfred de Musset, whom one resists, because one wishes to remain faithful to an adored Léonce; Léonce is Gustave Flaubert. Ah! I know the story, I have been saturated with it to nausea. I have more than three hundred letters, which Louise Colet wrote me, because she had taken me into her confidence about the attentions with which she persecuted Gustave Flaubert, who could no longer put up with them.

‘Her book *Lui* is worse than a lying fiction; it is a systematic perversion of the truth. The mask which conceals the characters is so transparent that they are recognisable; all those with whom she came into contact in life, all those who had not kept her at a distance, all of them she has

drowned in her untruthful prose. Here is a fact which I ought to set right, for she has changed its character. A person, who was of some consideration in his time, whom she calls Duchemin, and whose real name I will not disclose, fell in love with her, and declared his passion. In *Lui* she revels in the details of this adventure, and—to quote her own words: “The old lunatic pronouncing these words flung himself at my feet; he seized the floating folds of my dress between his knees as in a vice, and taking from an inner pocket a dirty pocket-book, he opened it, and pulled several bank-notes out of it. ‘Let a friend have his way,’ said he to me, holding them out to me, ‘and bestow just a little love on one who feels such a burning passion for you.’ He had the actions of a grotesque Tartufe. For a moment I thought that my hilarity was getting the better of my contempt; but my indignation was stronger still; with the back of my left hand I hit away the pocket-book, which went and fell by the fire, with the other I gave the old fool tottering on his knees such a violent push, that he rolled over backwards, on the carpet. His first care was, not to get up, but hurriedly to reach out his hand after the gaping pocket-book, which was touching the warm ashes, and might have caught fire. I admit that I should have been enraptured to see those insolent bank-notes blazing. I invent nothing in the scene that I describe.”

‘True, she invents nothing, but she omits to say, that two of her friends hidden behind a glass door covered with curtains were invisible spectators of this interview, and that their presence was not perhaps without some influence in producing the splendid gesture, which pushed the bank-notes aside, whose figure came to five hundred francs. One of those present told me the story, and was sufficiently humiliated at the part he had been caused to play.

‘In this pamphlet, in which hate and envy of Georges Sand break out at every line, Louise Colet is nothing less than a marchioness descended from champions of old, ruined by an unjust law-suit, and forced to make an income from the poetical talents with which nature has largely gifted her; she is inspired to such an extent and so naturally that in her walks with Alfred de Musset, they sport together upon the turf of Helicon, and speak nothing but verse. We are far out of the

record. She said she was born at Aix in 1815, and asserted that her father had been drawing master at the Lyons School; she was proud of it, and signed herself Louise Colet, *née* Revoil, till the epoch when this name was compromised in a non-literary adventure. In fact, she was born at Aix, September 17, 1810. Her father was Antoine Revoil, postal superintendent; Pierre Revoil the painter, who enjoyed some celebrity, was only her cousin. Her husband, whom she always abused, and of whom she has spoken in *Lui* in terms quite unmerited, was an excellent man, an impassioned lover of music, professor at the Conservatoire, gentle, and provided with a patience which succeeded in never breaking down.

'There are people who try to get themselves talked about in a certain way, there are those who wish to get themselves talked about, no matter how. Louise Colet was one of the latter class; she had a genius for advertisement, and shrank from nothing which might awaken attention. She had her portrait published in "The Beautiful Women of Paris," between a music-hall singer and a bonnet-maker. She was pretty after all, fairly well-formed, and with a curious contrast between her features, which were refined, and her walk, which was like a man's. Her clumsy extremities, rasping voice, revealed a substratum of vulgarity, to which her work still further testified.

'The high opinion that she had of her own beauty, absolutely rendered her ugly; she admired herself to the point of being displeasing. Her eyes lowered, her mouth formed in the shape of a heart, she would assume an air of candour to say: "You know that the arms of the Venus of Milo have been discovered?" "Why, where?" "In the sleeves of my dress." Louis Bouilhet used to say: "She has a natural want of naturalness."

"She has told in prose and verse the story of her intimacy with Gustave Flaubert, whom she has outraged and calumniated at her will. I never could understand how it was, that Flaubert, a born literary man, a solitary worker, a chaste man, did not turn from this literary virago. Their meeting took place in August (read "end of July") 1846 in Pradier's studio, while I was at Vichy. Pradier, not meaning anything by it, had said to Louise Colet: "You see that tall fellow there; he wishes to be a literary man, you should give him some advice." Those



who knew Flaubert, can imagine the kind of hearing he gave to such a remark. A pupil like this, very handsome, very tall, very vigorous, was not likely to be displeasing to the lady whom he used to call "the Muse." She used to say to Pradier: "My dear Phidias!" Pradier would answer: "My dear Sappho!" and, joking apart, they had these ways of treating one another as demi-gods. Flaubert smiled at it, but Sappho was skilful, and "the tall fellow, who wanted to be a literary man" was not sufficiently master of himself for self-defence; he failed in resolution, and had cause to be sorry for it. He had reckoned that this would be a freak without consequences, one of those agreeable, common-place incidents, which have no future, because there is nothing to justify them; he had thought that Paris and Croisset were far enough apart for the distance to give him some repose. He was mistaken.

'Masterful, with no respect for work, insatiable, and boasting of the fact, she persecuted Flaubert. He was afraid of her; when he came to Paris, he used to hide, and lower the blinds of his carriage. Sometimes he laughed at it, most often he was vexed. She would watch him, follow him, wait for him at the doors of houses, where he was calling. One evening, she forced an entrance into a private room at the *Trois Frères Provençaux*, raging, ready to kill her rival. She was greeted with an explosion of laughter; Louis de Cormenin, Bouilhet, Flaubert and I were dining together, and had fled from the public room in order to be able to talk more freely. One day when Flaubert was starting for Rouen, she penetrated into the waiting room at the station, and made such a tragical scene, that the railway servants were obliged to interfere. Flaubert was maddened, and implored for mercy; it was never granted him. Among his papers must have been found a note-book full of verses written in a small obscure, entangled ill-formed hand. It is a poem that the Muse composed in a thundering style on a visit of twenty-four hours, which she had made to Mantes in Flaubert's company, whom she compares to "an indomitable buffalo of the wilds of America," while she assimilates herself to La Vallière and Fontanges. Flaubert smiled at this clumsy poetry in which the transparent images struggled to reveal what they should have concealed; but at heart he

was flattered by it. However, he was afraid of scoffs, and never ventured to show this epithalamium to Louis Bouilhet.

‘There are women, who are like medlars, and who become good as they become old; this was not the case with Louise Colet; she never wearied in evil-speaking. When the success of *Madame Bovary* made Gustave Flaubert’s talent and reputation notorious, the young man to whom Pradier had pledged her to give advice, she was exasperated. She published a sonnet to proclaim that the book was written in the style of a bagman; she credited Flaubert with the low cunning of a Norman, and declared that his triumphs were the result of puffs, which he had had written for him in the papers. She ought to have known better than anybody that puffs are not adequate to establish a reputation, and do not give talent to those who have it not. Her resentment passed all bounds; in her romance *Lui*, she treacherously reproaches Léonce (Flaubert) for not having sent her 10,000 francs in exchange for an album, which I have turned over, and which was worth fifty crowns. She was often in want of money, for her works were not much run after; she was not rich, her husband had died in 1851 and her income had not increased.’

In the end, the good lady took to writing fashion articles, puffing milliners, glove-makers, perfumers, and the like. She used sometimes to be paid in kind, and would then go about among her acquaintances trying to dispose of bonnets, scarves, hygienic garters, and what not. She died in 1875, having made a desperate effort to recapture Flaubert after the publication of *Salammbô*, and having written a violent attack on him in prose, *La Servante*, in which she did not even spare his mother, whom she had once interviewed stormily at Croisset. Maxime Ducamp suggests as an epitaph: ‘Here lies the woman who compromised Victor Cousin, made Alfred de Musset ridiculous, calumniated Gustave Flaubert, and tried to assassinate Alphonse Karr: *Requiescat in Pace*.’

Upon this story there is a good deal to be said. The first and most obvious reflection that suggests itself, is that

a man, who tells a tale without knowing all the facts, runs some considerable risk of being mistaken. When Maxime Ducamp published his *Souvenirs Littéraires*, not even the first volume of Flaubert's correspondence had appeared; from which alone it is sufficiently evident that Flaubert was not so much the victim of irresolution as he afterwards appeared to be; no man was ever in love, if he was not. The first interview at Mantes took place at the end of September 1846, and was the occasion of the poem alluded to; after Flaubert's return from the East (between 1851-1854) there were other similar meetings; to which the second volume of letters testifies. Up to April 1854 Flaubert was in frequent correspondence with Madame Colet, and visited her, from time to time, in Paris. Louis Bouilhet, at the end of that period living in Paris, used also to visit her, and keep Flaubert informed of her well-being. We do not know the precise moment at which Flaubert definitely broke with her. We see the rupture impending in the letters of the spring of 1854; and on the 5th August of the same year, Flaubert wrote to Louis Bouilhet:—

‘In the midst of my corporal anguish (he had been suffering from a severe inflammation of the tongue) and by way of farce to enliven me, a wild letter fell upon me from Paris. The . . . was losing her head. All was discovered; her position compromised, etc. I must write, I must this, that, and the other.’

It is easy enough to supply the word missing. The Muse is, by this time, too well known to all of us to be concealed. Later in the same year, in the winter, he asked Louis Bouilhet:—

‘How is that poor Muse? What do you make of her? What does she say? She writes to me less often. I think that in her heart she is tired of me. Whose is the fault? Fate. For myself my conscience is perfectly calm on the subject, I do not find that I have anything to reproach myself with. Any other in her place would be tired too. I have nothing lovable about



me, and I say that in the deepest sense of the word. She is perhaps the only woman who ever loved me. It is a curse that Heaven has sent upon her? If she dared, she would declare that I do not love her. She is mistaken, however.'

After this the Muse disappears from the correspondence, except that in 1859 Flaubert recommends Ernest Feydeau to read *Lui*, and *La Servante* (poem); also *Une Histoire de Soldat*, by the same author, with the comment: 'You cannot picture to yourself such pitiful vulgarity'; and in 1876 he wrote to Madame Roger des Genettes:—

'You have very correctly guessed the whole effect that the death of the poor Muse has had upon me. The recollection of her thus revived made me return upon the course of my life. But your friend has become more stoical since the last year. I have trampled so many things down in order to be able to live. In short, after a whole afternoon spent with days that are gone, I *determined* not to think any more about it, and set to work again. Yet another end.'

Thus the appearance of the whole affair is changed. This was not a mere light escapade, to which neither party attached any importance. It is true that very soon the passion was all on the side of the lady, and that the gentleman did his best to restrict the connection within the decent limits of an intimate literary friendship; and though the end of the correspondence has been suppressed, and possibly other letters unflattering to Madame Colet's self-esteem, it is significant that neither during the three months' tour in Brittany, nor during the longer Eastern tour, did she receive, or at any rate keep, any letters from Flaubert.

Meanwhile, as to the lady herself, it is sufficient to read *La Servante* (prose) to be convinced that Maxime Ducamp is not over severe. What are we to think of a woman over fifty, who writes the story of her own violent passion for a



man ten years younger than herself—a story well known to her contemporaries—almost without disguise, and puts it in the mouth of her maid, so that she may be able to indulge herself in lavish praises of her own beauty? She even describes her visit to Madame Flaubert, whose icy demeanour on the occasion we can imagine, and makes a great grievance out of the fact that she was not invited to stay the night, though she had a cab in attendance and the faithful serving-maid.

Her life of Madame du Châtelet betrays the same innate vulgarity of mind; she could not write a page without thinking of herself and obtruding herself upon her reader. Her own relations with Victor Cousin are tacitly appealed to, as she tells the story of Voltaire.

Then how came Flaubert to fall in love with her? How does any human being come to fall in love with another human being? The question is unanswerable; our friends' marriages and love affairs are a perpetual cause of amazement to us, and always will be.

Meanwhile, Maxime Ducamp's story, however truthful in the main, necessarily perverts the significance of the facts. Madame Colet was not, in 1846, so obviously what she showed herself to be in 1856. The story as told by Ducamp is told by the light of subsequent knowledge of Madame Colet, and in ignorance of great part of the relation between her and Flaubert.

The year 1846 was Flaubert's year of trouble: his father had died, his sister had died, his own health was an ever-present nightmare. The friendship with Louis Bouilhet was only in its infancy, and it was the nature of the man to demand a strong affection; he was bound to expand, to pour out his hopes, his sorrows, his literary projects, his temporary annoyances into some sympathetic ear; his sister had been the intimate companion of his life; her marriage

and death left him stranded. It is true that there was Maxime Ducamp; but, just at this time, Maxime Ducamp was away from Paris, and, further, Flaubert's relation with Ducamp was always rather that of the person who lets himself be loved, than that of the one who loves. Ducamp tried to control and guide him. Flaubert was grateful for his affection, returned it in his boisterous way, but was never quite satisfied with it; there was always something in Ducamp rather irritating to him. Thus, when Flaubert was in Paris in July 1846, he was ready to fall at the feet of almost any woman who betrayed a liking for him, and he was particularly susceptible to the charms of a clever woman; by far the larger number of his letters were written to women. We have seen how Flaubert met Victor Hugo at Pradier's; Madame Colet had contrived to hook herself on to Victor Hugo; she would not appear to Flaubert as a literary virago in 1846, but rather as a brilliant and beautiful woman, occupying a prominent place in the first literary society in Paris; he was then the aspirant, she had arrived. An enthusiastic admirer (of literature?) had caused her complete works to be printed in large-paper quarto volumes, and published twenty-five copies for private circulation. Victor Hugo wrote letters to her, beginning 'O sister!' She had been addressed by a poet as 'Penserosa.' Flaubert wanted a woman to be his literary companion, and here was the one who, after Georges Sand, seemed to him to occupy the highest place in letters, ready to be that companion—nay, more, to bestow her love upon him.

There was also in Flaubert, when confronted with the practical world, a simplicity strangely in contrast with the minuteness of his observation. His mind, while recording what was passing around him, did not immediately draw conclusions. He mentally photographed the external world,

but did not develop the photograph till afterwards. To the hundred little gestures by which character is revealed in daily intercourse, he was at the time blind; it did not occur to him to question anybody's motives for being kind to him; and this big lion was particularly fond of being stroked the right way. But on any literary question, he was, as a rule, more than wide awake. Why then did he not at once see through the shallowness of Madame Colet's literary capacity? This is due to the curious way in which he combined his literary admiration with his affection. He loved Louis Bouilhet, as much as one man can love another, therefore Louis Bouilhet was not only *a* poet, but *the* poet; he fell in love with Madame Colet, and therefore swallowed her vulgar verses whole, as long as his passion lasted. His disillusionment with regard to her began in the region of letters; and he did not break with her permanently till she forced him to see in her a rival, not only to his mother, but to Madame Bovary. It is this which gives the episode more than a gossip interest. Flaubert's fidelity to art was tested by it; and he came unscathed out of the ordeal. It confirmed him in his determination not to marry; and there can be little doubt but that many pages of *Madame Bovary* would have been less well written had it not been for this experience. It is a curious fact that Madame Colet was of the same age as the original of Madame Arnoux, the heroine of Flaubert's sentimentalities at Trouville, and must have borne a strong personal resemblance to her.

In dealing with Flaubert's correspondence after this period, and especially his correspondence with Madame Colet, the question arises as to whether it would not be advisable to make a digest of the whole; extract from the mass of letters all that is valuable in the way of opinion; give examples of characteristic forms of statement, and transitions of thought;

in a word, create a systematic compendium of maxims of Gustave Flaubert. The reasons for not adopting such a course are obvious. The letters, not being written for publication, are to some extent incoherent. Flaubert, after a hard day's work sought *relaxation* in correspondence; he wrote as though he were communing with himself; he was at no pains to measure his statements, to refrain from repetitions. It would, however, be practically impossible to make a digest of the letters without to some extent assuming the office of critic; and criticism on what was never intended to be published is out of place. The value of the letters as a human document lies precisely in the fact that they were thrown off unconsciously; and give us, without any concealment, without any straining for effect, the passing feeling of the man who wrote them. They give us more. If his friends are to be believed, Flaubert talked to them much as he wrote to them; and it is from the letters that we are able to draw conclusions as to the fascination which the personality of the man had for those who knew him intimately, and as to the invigorating talk which he fearlessly flung out of him.

On the other hand, to reproduce all that has been published of the correspondence would be to weary the reader with repetition. Therefore, those passages have been selected for translation which seemed to bear upon features of his life interesting to students of human nature, and the extracts have been strung together in order of time. Any other manipulation would destroy the chief charm of the letters, their fresh personal note; while the perpetual intervention of the editor would be tiresome.

From all points of view it would be a grievous error to attempt to construct a Flaubertian system. No man ever had a greater detestation of dogma; and he was extremely



angry when his name was mentioned as the leader of a school. He was at no pains to formulate a set of literary doctrines in spite of his readiness to thunder on the text of 'Art for Art's sake'; and, least of all, should a serious philosophical system be looked for in his private correspondence.

The letters to Madame Colet at this period, 1851-4, dealt chiefly with literary questions, and the agonies which Flaubert experienced in writing *Madame Bovary*; there were also a few passages, in which his deeper personality revealed itself. As his first letter to her, after his return from the East, is a reply, we may presume that it was the lady who resumed the correspondence. There is evidence in one of the letters that he tried to break with her when leaving France; he did not go to bid her farewell. There is no allusion to the death of her husband in any of the letters; but we know that he died in 1851. Is it possible that she formed some hope of finding him a successor, and thus was led to reopen the intimacy?

'There are in me, speaking of literature, two distinct men, one who is taken by resounding cries, lyricism, great eagle flights, by all the sonority of phrases, elevations of the ideal; another who works and worries into the truth, as far as he can, who loves to bring the small fact to book as exhaustively as the big one, who would like to make you feel the things that he describes, almost materially. This latter is fond of laughter, and delights in the animal side of man.

'What seems fine to me, what I would like to write, would be a book about nothing, a book without any external connection, which would support itself of itself by the internal force of its style, as the earth is held in the air without being supported; a book which would have hardly any subject—or at least in which the subject would be almost invisible. The most beautiful works are those in which there is least matter; the closer the expression comes to the thought, the closer the word adheres to it, and disappears, the more beautiful it is.

‘It is for this reason that there are neither good nor bad subjects, and that one might almost establish an axiom, looking from the point of view of pure art, to the effect that there is no subject; style being in itself an independent manner of seeing things; I should require a whole book to develope what I mean.’

This literary doctrine recurs again and again; and to the ordinary sinner is certainly incomprehensible.

Music seems to fit the definition on which Flaubert tries to insist. Strings of words, whose mere sounds suggest certain conditions of thought, are an impossible conception. The idea arose partly from Flaubert’s own personal difficulties in composition and sensitive ear to begin with, and is something different from his protest against ‘the novel with a purpose,’ though closely allied to it, and often confused with it; as also from his frequently expressed demand for the impersonal in art.

‘You tell me that you begin to understand my life; it would be necessary to know its origins. Some day I shall describe myself quite at my ease; but at that time I shall no longer enjoy the necessary strength. I have no horizon in front of me, except that which surrounds me at this present. I consider myself as being forty years old, fifty, sixty. My life is a wound-up machine, which turns regularly; what I do to-day, I shall do to-morrow, I did it yesterday, I have been the same man for ten years; it has turned out, that my organisation is a system, the whole without any deliberately adopted purpose, by the tendency of things in general, which makes the white bear inhabit the ice, and the camel walk on the sand. I am a man-pen, I am by it, by reason of it, in relation to it, and much more with it. You will see from the beginning of next winter an apparent change. I shall spend three winters in wearing out some pairs of shoes; then I shall return to my lair, where I shall die obscure or illustrious. Manuscript or in print, there is however one thing that torments me, the want of knowledge of my measure. This man, who says he is so calm, is full of doubts

about himself, he would like to know just how far he can rise, and the exact power of his muscles. But to ask that is to be very ambitious, for the exact knowledge of one's strength is perhaps nothing other than genius.'

The astuteness with which Madame Colet beguiled her admirer may be inferred from the following :—

'A fortnight ago on the Pont Royal on our way to dinner you said a thing which pleased me much, to wit, "that you were beginning to perceive that there is nothing artistically more feeble, than to introduce one's personal sentiments in art."'

There is nothing more flattering to the human male than to make a convert of an adoring female ; the experienced Muse had learned her lesson.

Talking of De Musset he says :—

'Nerves, magnetism, there you have poetry ! No ; poetry has a calmer base ; if having sensitive nerves were enough to make a poet, I should be a greater poet than Shakespeare, than Homer ; the latter I picture to myself as far from being a nervous man. This confusion is a sacrilege ; I can say something on the subject, I, who have heard people speaking in a low voice thirty yards off me through closed doors ; I, whose viscera have been seen through my skin, leaping and bounding, who have at times felt in the space of a second thousands of thoughts, images, combinations of all kinds, which threw into my brain all at once, as it were, all the lighted squibs of a set piece of fireworks ; but these are excellent moving subjects of conversation. Poetry is not a debility of the mind, and these nervous susceptibilities are. This faculty of abnormal perception is a weakness. I explain myself.

'If I had had a sounder brain, I should not have made myself ill over reading law, and wearying myself ; I should have made some profit out of it, instead of getting harm. The vexation instead of staying in my head passed into my limbs, and made them writhe in convulsions. It was a *deviation*. There often appear children, who are made ill by music ; they have great capacity for it, retain airs on the first hearing, become excited over playing the piano, their hearts beat, they

become thin, pale, fall sick, and their poor nerves, like those of dogs, writhe in suffering at the sound of the notes. These are not the future Mozarts; the vocation has been misplaced; the idea has passed into the flesh, where it remains barren, and the flesh wastes; neither genius nor health are the outcome.

‘The same thing in art; passion does not make verses, and the more personal you are, the more feeble you are.’

Flaubert rarely speaks of his nervous malady; but he carefully studied it, and therefore the ideas that he formed about it are interesting, though they may have no value to physicians.

‘You tell me that if you were a man, you would be furious at seeing a woman prefer a mediocrity to yourself. O Woman! O poetess! How little you know of the hearts of males! By the age of eighteen a man has already received so many knock-down blows in this particular, that he has become callous. Men treat women, as we treat the public; with much outward deference, and a sovereign inward contempt. Love humiliated becomes the pride of the libertine. I believe that success with women is generally a sign of mediocrity, and yet, it is what we all envy, the crown of everything else; but one does not like to admit it, and as we consider the objects of their preference very much beneath us, we arrive at the conviction that they are stupid, which is not the case. We judge from our point of view, they from theirs; beauty is not to a woman the same that it is to a man; they will never agree on that subject, nor on the question of mind, sentiment, nor anything else.’

Again, on the question of Art:—

‘The time of the beautiful is passed. Humanity free to return to it, has nothing, for the present quarter of an hour, to do with it. The further it goes the more scientific will art become; and in the same way science will be more artistic; the two after having been separated at the base will meet at the summit.

‘I can conceive, however, a style which would be beautiful, which some one will produce one of these days, in ten years, or



ten centuries, and which will be as rhythmical as verse, precise as the language of science, and which will have undulations, modulations like these of a violoncello, flashes of fire. A style which would enter into the idea like the stroke of a stiletto, and on which our thought would sail over gleaming surfaces as when one sails in a boat with a good wind to one's back. Prose is born of yesterday, that has to be said. Verse is the form, the appropriate form, of the literature of antiquity. All the combinations of prosody have been made, those of prose are still to make.'

Occasionally Flaubert makes a strange muddle over a pretty speech, as in the case of the bed, which he destined for his parents :—

'I have always lived without diversions, I should require them huge. I was born with a heap of vices, which have never poked their noses out of the window. I like wine, and I do not drink. I am a gambler, and I have never touched a card. Debauchery pleases me, and I live like a monk. I am at bottom a mystic, and I believe in nothing. But I love you, my dear heart, and I greet you tenderly. Truly, if I were to see you every day, perhaps I should love you less ; but no, there is still a long time before us, you live in the back-shop of my heart, and you go out on Sundays.'

The Muse was not content with playing the part of Sally in our Alley ; she wished to incorporate herself more closely with Flaubert,—to be received, so to speak, by the family.

'Yet another word with reference to my mother. No doubt she would have received you in her best manner, if you had met one way or another, but as to being *flattered* by it (don't take this for a gratuitous insult ;) you must know that she is never flattered by anything ; poor woman ! it is very difficult to please her, she has in her personality something imperturbable, icy, simple, which makes you ill at ease ; she does without principles still more comfortably than without expansiveness. Naturally virtuous, she immodestly declares she does not know what virtue is, and is unconscious of ever having sacrificed anything to it.'

The Muse had a prodigious power of weeping, being a profoundly sensitive creature, after the manner of selfish people. Her tears occasionally elicit valuable words of comfort.

‘Do not let us bewail anything ; to complain of everything which afflicts or irritates us is to complain of the very constitution of existence. We are made to depict sorrow, are we, and to have nothing else to do with it. Let us be religious ; as for me, every thing disagreeable that happens to me, be it small or great, makes me cling closer to my eternal trouble. I clutch hold of it with both my hands, and I close my eyes calling for grace ; it comes, God has pity on the simple, and the sun always shines for the strong hearts, who place themselves above the mountains. I am taking to a kind of aesthetic mysticism (if the two words can go together) and I could wish it were stronger. When no encouragement comes to you from others, when the external world disgusts you, makes you languid, corrupts you, brutalises you, honourable and fastidious people are forced to seek in themselves somewhere for a more decent place to live in. If Society continues to go on as it is now, we shall again see, I believe, mystics, such as there have been at all dark periods. The soul unable to expand will concentrate herself ; the time is not far off when the universal weariness will return, the belief in the end of the world, the expectation of a Messiah. But the theological basis wanting, where will now be the starting point of that enthusiasm, which knows not itself ? Some will seek it in the flesh, others in the old religions, others in art and humanity, as the Hebrew race in the desert went to worship all manner of idols. We ourselves have come a little too soon, in five and twenty years the point of intersection will be superb in the hands of a master, then prose above all (the younger form) will be able to pay a formidable humanitarian symphony ; books like the *Satyricon* and the *Golden Ass* may return, possessing in psychological outpourings all that those have in sensual excesses.

‘Here is what all the socialists in the world have refused to see with their eternal materialist preaching, they have denied *pain*, they have blasphemed three parts of modern poetry ;

nothing will eradicate, nothing dry up the blood of Christ, which stirs in us, there is no need to wipe it away, but to make streams for it to flow in. If the sense of human insufficiency, of the nothingness of life were to pass away (and that would be the consequence of the socialist's hypothesis) we should be duller than the birds, who at least perch on the trees. The soul is now sleeping, drunk with words, she has heard, but she will have a frantic awakening when she will give herself over to the joys of freedom, for she will no longer have anything around her to trammel her, neither government, nor religion, nor any formula; republicans of every shade appear to me the most barbarous pedants in the world, they who dream of organisation by legislations, of a society like a convent. I believe, on the contrary, that rules are on their way off, that the barriers are being overturned, that the earth is levelling. This present great confusion will perhaps herald liberty. Art, which always advances, has at any rate followed this course; what school of poetry now stands? plastic itself becomes increasingly less possible with the limitations of our language, its preciseness, and our vague, mixed, unseizable ideas; all that we can do then, is by dint of skill to screw up the strings of our guitar so often thrummed upon, and to be above all virtuosos, since simplicity at our epoch is a chimera. Along with that the picturesque is almost leaving the world, poetry will not however die, but what will be the poetry of the future? I do not see it clearly, who knows? Beauty will perhaps become a sentiment, useless to humanity, and art will be something holding a middle place between music and algebra.

‘Since I can not see to-morrow, I should have liked to see yesterday. Why did I not live at any rate under Louis xiv., with a big wig, tightly fitting stockings, and the society of M. Descartes? Why did I not live in the time of Ronsard? Why did I not live in the time of Nero? How I would have talked with the Greek rhetoricians! How I would have travelled in the great chariots on the Roman roads and slept in the hostelries at night with the vagabond priests of Cybele! Why did I not live above all in the time of Pericles to sup with Aspasia crowned with violets, and singing verses between white marble walls? Alas! it is all finished, all that; that dream will



never come back. Now I have lived everywhere ; doubtless in some state of pre-existence. I am sure of having been leader of a troop of strolling comedians, under the Roman Empire ; one of those fine fellows, who went to Sicily to buy women to make actresses of them, and who were at once professors, pimps, and artists ; they are fine figures are those same rascals in the comedies of Plautus, and in reading them it all comes back upon me like a reminiscence. Have you ever experienced that—the historic shudder ?

‘ When we compare ourselves with those who surround us, we admire ourselves, but when we lift our eyes higher to the masters, to the absolute, to the dream, how we despise ourselves ! I read one of these days recently, a fine thing ; to wit the life of Carême the cook. I do not know by what connection of ideas, I had come to think of this illustrious inventor of sauces, but I turned out his name in the *Universal Biography* ; it is magnificent considered as the existence of an artist and enthusiast, it would stir the envy of more than one poet. Here are some of his phrases : when he was told to take care of his health and work less ; “ The charcoal kills us,” he said, “ but what does it matter ? Fewer days, more glory.” And, in one of his books in which he admits that he was gluttonous, “ but I perceived my vocation so clearly, that I did not stop at eating !” This “ stop at eating ” is prodigious in a man, whose art it was.’

Here is another piece of literary criticism flattering to our national pride, and containing a singularly acute observation :—

‘ What distinguishes great geniuses is generalisation and creation ; they resume scattered personalities in a type, and bring new characters to the conscious perception of humanity ; do we not believe in the existence of Don Quixote as in that of Cæsar ? Shakespeare is something tremendous in this respect ; he was not a man but a continent ; there were great men in him, whole crowds, countries. They have no need of attending to style, men like that, they are strong in spite of all their faults and because of them ; but we, the little ones, we are worth nothing except by finish of execution. Hugo, in this century, will knock the bottom out of everybody, although he



is full of bad things, but what a wind ! What a wind ! I venture here on a proposition, which I would not dare to express anywhere else : it is that the great men often write very badly, and so much the better for them. It is not to them that we must go to look for the art of form, but to the second bests, to Horace, to La Bruyère ; one should know the masters by heart, idolise them, try to think like them,—and then separate from them for ever. In the matter of technical instruction there is more profit to be drawn from the learned, the dexterous minds.'

On another occasion he says of Shakespeare :—

' But what a man he was ! How small other poets appear by his side, all without any exception, and above all so trivial. . . It seems to me that if I were to see Shakespeare in person, I should die of fear.'

The Muse meanwhile was pursuing her avocation. She undertook to write a poem on the Acropolis for a prize competition, and the prophet of 'art for art alone' materially assisted her; he and Louis Bouilhet revised the manuscript together. The work was submitted to the Academy. It was not always easy to correct the works of the Muse; her ignorance seems to have been as robustly developed as her ambition.

Flaubert sent the Muse his private notes on his Eastern travels; she criticised them chiefly to express surprise that her name did not appear in them, and to reprove Flaubert's want of delicacy. In his reply the following passage occurs :—

'Up to the present time people have understood by the East something gleaming, yelling, impassioned, dashing. They have seen nothing in it but dancing women and curved sabres; fanaticism, voluptuousness; they remain where Byron left them; for my part I saw it differently. What I like in the East, on the contrary, is the unconscious greatness, the harmony of things incongruous. I remember a bather who had a silver bracelet

on his left arm, and on the other a blister. That is the true East ; rascals in rags galooned, but covered with vermin. . . . That reminds me of Jaffa, where on entering I smelled at once the odour of orange gardens and corpses ; the cemetery exposed its half-corrupted skeletons, while the green trees swung their golden fruit over our heads. Do you not see that this poetry is complete, that this is the great synthesis ? All the appetites of the imagination and thought are there satisfied at once ; there is nothing left out here : but people of taste, the people of pretty touches, of purification, of illusions, those, who with manuals of anatomy for ladies, science within the grasp of all, pretty sentiments, and honeyed art, change, erase, remove, and call themselves classic, the wretches. Ah, how I would like to be a learned man ! What a beautiful book I would write entitled *Of the Interpretation of Antiquity* ; for I am sure I am in the true tradition ; what I put into it is the modern sentiment.'

The nature of the disillusionment which Flaubert was to suffer in the matter of the Muse is clearly indicated in the following :—

'You are not a woman, and if I have loved you more and more deeply (try to understand this word "deeply") than any other, it is because you seemed to me less a woman than any other ; none of our differences have ever arisen except from the feminine side of you. Think over this—you will see if I am mistaken. I would wish that we should keep our two bodies, and be only one same mind ; understand that this is not love, but something higher, it seems to me, since this longing of the soul is almost a need that the soul has to live, to expand, to be greater. Every sentiment is an extension. For this reason liberty is the noblest of passions.'

Here is another reference to his malady :—

'No, I regret none of my youth. I was horribly wearied. I dreamed of suicide, I consumed myself in all possible kinds of melancholy ; my nervous malady did me good, it diverted all that to the physical element, and left my head cooler, and then it introduced me to curious psychological phenomena, of which

no one has any idea, or rather which no one has felt. I will take my revenge some day, I will utilise them in a book (that metaphysical romance with apparitions of which I spoke to you), but as it is a subject which frightens me, speaking from the point of view of health, I must wait, and I must be far from these impressions to be able to give them to myself artificially, ideally, and so without danger to myself or my work.'

As a specimen of the Muse's poetical powers the following line, literally translated from the *Paysanne*, is illustrative :—

'And each year he had a baby.'

'Et chaque année il avait un enfant.'

It is necessary to quote the French in order to show that no injustice is being done to the good lady. Even the enamoured Flaubert was startled by this.

With the imaginary conversations of the dotards in Egypt, the following may be compared : Flaubert had been at a funeral :—

'While I was looking at poor Pouchet, who was writhing as he stood like a reed before the wind, do you know what I had beside me? A gentleman, who questioned me on my travels: "Are there museums in Egypt? What is the state of the public libraries?" (this is literal) and as I dispersed his illusions, he was miserable. "Is it possible? What a wretched country! How is civilisation to . . . etc. etc.' The interment being Protestant the priest spoke in French at the edge of the grave; my friend was better pleased with that: "and then Catholicism is robbed of these flowers of rhetoric." O men, O mortals, and to say that one is always deceived, that one is wrong to believe in one's power of inventing, that the reality always is too big for you. I went to this ceremony with the intention of stiffening my mind a bit in the art of delicate touches, of trying to discover a few pebbles, and here are whole blocks falling on my head! The grotesque drummed at my ears and the pathetic was in convulsions before my eyes. From whence I draw, or rather re-draw, this conclusion: you should never

fear being exaggerated. All the great men have been so, Michael Angelo, Rabelais, Shakespeare, Molière.'

Flaubert for the sake of a friend could put up with a bore in spite of his irritable nerves:—

'Yesterday the 6th, and to-day the 7th of July 1853 will be celebrated in the annals of my existence as boredom. Two days of Azvédo! Two afternoons. Two dinners. What a reptile! and the best of it is, this dear fellow adores me; he embraced me this evening on leaving! He came yesterday at eleven o'clock, and I *made* him go by the boat at seven; not knowing how to spend the time, I proposed to him a walk in the forest; it was splendid weather, his aspect was mitigated by that of the forest; and in fact, I was not too bored! but it is when one is with him alone, and looks at him! To-day at four o'clock he came back with Bouilhet, whom he won't leave, and who is made *ill* by him. What a strange thing! for at the bottom the poor fellow is not a fool, he has sometimes a glimmer of genius through his great rants, and he possesses one very rare quality—to wit, enthusiasm (a quality, however, which has more to do with his blood, his Spanish descent, than his individual mind) but he is so common, so repulsive, nervously speaking, that if he had rendered you all the services in the world, you could not love him. Then, in what does being agreeable consist? What is this evil, subtle miasma, that emanates from an individual, and makes him unpleasant to you, even when he is not so. What is the reason of that? I am worrying myself to find out. And then what a dress! What clothes! Threadbare black all over; low shoes, grey stockings, a coloured shirt, its colour disappearing under complicated patterns; a hangman's beard! that is strong, the beard is a whole universe! remember this great doctrine which I have this moment discovered. Oh heaven, heaven, have we not enough moral dirt without physical dirt? How these creatures make one love beauty! Yes, a beautiful face is a fine thing, a beautiful stuff, beautiful marble is fine, the flash of gold, the lustre of satin, a green bough swinging in the wind, a great ox ruminating in the grass, a flying bird, all are fine; it is only man who is ugly. How sad that all is! He makes my brain turn! and to say that if I were blind, I should perhaps



like him better, I believe that these repulsions are intimations from Providence, it is an instinct of self preservation, which warns us to be on our guard, and I am killing myself in the effort to find out in what way Azvédo may injure me.'

Upon this, the Muse took up her parable in the high moral line and lectured her admirer, with the following result:—

'Still savage, still fierce, still undaunted, and passionate, what a strange Muse it is! And how unjust in its tempers! I put that all down to the score of lyricism, but I assure you that it has a very narrow side, and even bruises sometimes, dear good Muse! Because that idiot of an Azvédo bored me two days you send me a kind of vague fulmination against him, against myself, against everything. But I assure you that I am quite innocent of all that; and, in the first place I did not invite him, it is he, who of his own accord, came back the second day; unless one took him by the shoulders, it was impossible to get him outside the door. He came back with Bouilhet, and *he* wanted nothing more than to come for comfort. As for him, Bouilhet, after what Azvédo had done, or said he had done, for *Melaenis*, he could not send him off brutally either; at last in the evening I breathe out my boredom in ten lines to be rid of it, think no more of it, then I spoke to you of a heap of other things better and higher (of which you do not say one word) and you send me back in answer a kind of denunciation in four pages, as if I adored this gentleman, made much of him, etc., and abandoned you for him: you will admit that it is funny, good Muse, and this is the second time that it has happened! What a child you are!'

The fact was—a fact that Flaubert did not see—that the Muse was profoundly jealous of Louis Bouilhet; in *La Servante* she openly accuses him of promoting the breach between her and Flaubert. For which, if he were responsible, he would deserve our best thanks. Azvédo was a symptom of Bouilhet's influence over Flaubert; that was enough.

In the following passage Flaubert, perhaps unconsciously, describes his own life :—

‘Yes—I maintain (and this should be for me a practical dogma in the artist’s life) one must take one’s existence in two parts : live like a middle-class man and think like a demi-god.

‘If you wish to seek happiness and the beautiful at the same time, you will not reach either ; for the second only comes by sacrifice ; Art, like the God of the Jews, delights in burnt offerings.

‘Let us then look for tranquillity only, let us ask life only for an arm-chair, not for thrones ; for sufficient, not for intoxication. Passion accommodates itself ill to that long patience, which the craft demands. Art is vast enough to occupy the whole of a man ; to divert anything from it is almost a crime, it is a theft from the idea, a failure of duty.’

Again the Muse wishes to establish closer relations :—

‘What a strange creature you are, my dear friend, to send me diatribes again, as my chemist would say. You ask me for a thing, I say yes, I promise it you again, and you scold again. Well—since you hide nothing from me (and I approve of this) I do not conceal from you, that this seems to me a fixed idea with you ; you wish to establish between affections of a different nature a connection of which I neither see the sense nor the utility. I do not see at all, in what way the civilities, which you do me at Paris, engage my mother in anything. I was for three years a visitor at the Schlesingers, where she never set her feet. In the same way Bouilhet has been coming here for eight years to sleep, dine, and lunch every Sunday without his mother having been even once revealed to us, though she comes to Rouen nearly every month ; and I assure you, that my mother is not in the least shocked by it. Lastly, it shall be done as you desire. I promise, I swear to you, that I will place your reasons before her, and that I will beg her to bring it about that you see one another. As for the rest ; with the best intentions in the world, I can do nothing ; perhaps you will suit one another, perhaps you will dislike one another enormously. The good woman is not particularly adhesive,

and she has given up seeing not only all her old acquaintances, but even her friends.

‘There is something wrong in my personality, and my vocation. I was born a lyric, and I do not write verses. I would like to overwhelm those I love with kindness, and I make them weep. Now Bouilhet!—there is a man! What a complete nature! If I were capable of being jealous of anyone, I should be of him; with the depressing life that he has led, and the slops that he has swallowed, I should certainly be an idiot by now, or at the galleys, or hung by my own hands. Sufferings from outside have made him better, that is the way with the tall forests, they grow in the wind and the dust, through flint and granite, while the garden fruit trees with all their manure and straw coverings die in a row against a wall, and in the face of the sun. Indeed I love him well, that is all that I can say about it, and never mistrust him.

‘Do you know what I was talking about to my mother all yesterday evening? About you. I told her many things, that she did not know, or at least that she only half guessed; she appreciates you, and I am sure that this winter she will see you with pleasure. So that question is settled.’

The Muse was not, however, pacified; and in the midst of criticisms on her poems, suggestions for their improvement, praise of isolated lines, we have such passages as the following:—

‘Finally, poor dear friend, do you wish me to disclose to you the bottom of my thoughts? or rather to open to you the bottom of your heart? I think that your love is on the decline. The dissatisfaction, the suffering, that I cause you, has no other origin, for such as I am, such I have always been. But now, you see me better, and you judge me reasonably perhaps. I know nothing of it; but still when one loves completely, one loves what one loves, as it is, with its faults, and its monstrosities, one even adores its mange, dotes on its hump, breathes with rapture its poisonous breath. It is the same way with moral deformities; now I am deformed, low, selfish, etc. Do you know that will all end in making me unsupportably proud? Always blaming me as people do. I do not believe there is a

mortal on the earth, who is less approved of than I, but I will not change. I will not reform.

‘What makes you think that I did not care very much about the upshot of the philosopher’s visit? Because I could not come to you on Wednesday evening, harassed as I was with business, and running about. Ah! know you that I have never told you a quarter of the things that you write to me, I who am so hard, as you say, and have not the shadow of an affection for you. That completely breaks you down, you say; and me too, and more than I say or will ever say. But when one writes such things, one of two things is true; either one thinks them, or one does not think them; if one does not think them, it is abominable, and if one only expresses one’s real conviction in words, would it not be better simply to shut one’s door to people.’

And so forth. In fact, Flaubert’s patience gave way at last. This quarrel was made up; so was another; but the Muse had only one string to her harp, and as she played on it very often, Flaubert saw that there was no alternative except to break with her altogether, or marry her. The latter was impossible if he were to continue to live, as he had always lived, putting art in the first place in his life. The woman who was always writing, crying for more affection, more frequent visits, would insist on entering his study, disturbing his whole life. Knowing his own nervous temperament, he knew that he would make the Muse a miserable wife, and, through his own impatience of suffering in others, himself a miserable husband. He chose wisely.

Possibly the connection began with an insufficient appreciation of what it might lead to; when it became clear that the Muse wished to make it permanent, Flaubert did his honest best to educate her up to the level of being a literary companion; he failed completely. From April 1854 Louis Bouilhet took her place as chief correspondent, so long as the friends lived apart. Perhaps she was right to be jealous after all.



## CHAPTER XII

### ‘MADAME BOVARY’

WHEN Flaubert was sitting in the study at Croisset in the summer of 1846 with Louis Bouilhet and Maxime Ducamp, and the question of their literary future arose, he would say: ‘We must begin with a thunderclap.’ He did. In 1856 *Madame Bovary* was published in the *Revue de Paris*; the first number appeared on October 1st. On the 24th of January following the author ‘honoured with his presence’ the dock of the sixth chamber of the criminal administration. He was charged with an outrage on morality and religion. The prosecution was really directed against the *Revue de Paris*, which had taken a line hostile to the Government, and had already been twice warned. Flaubert was acquitted; but the verdict was modified by reservations of an uncomplimentary character. The prosecution was attended by the usual consequences; it drew attention to the book, which had a very large sale, and its author at once took rank with the first literary men in France.

While in one sense Flaubert profited by the action brought against him, in another he suffered a serious injury. Towards the end of his life he resented being spoken of as the author of *Madame Bovary*, and often expressed a wish to buy up all the remaining copies, and suppress the publication. He felt that his work had been misunderstood, and saw that

there was some reason for the misunderstanding ; to this misunderstanding the prosecution had contributed by drawing attention exclusively to one half of the book, and ignoring the other half.

We have seen that after the friends had condemned the first *St. Anthony* to the fire, they had recommended Flaubert to find a subject which would leave no room for the development of his exaggerated lyrical tendency, and they had suggested the story of Delaunay. The details of this story, according to Maxime Ducamp, were as follows. Delaunay, a country-bred youth of no ability, had been at school at Rouen with Flaubert and Bouilhet ; he took up the study of medicine, became a pupil of the Père Flaubert, passed examinations which qualified him to practise on the lowest grade in the French medical profession, as an ‘ officer of health,’ and settled in a village in the neighbourhood. He first married an elderly woman, who was supposed to have money ; and, on her death, a young woman of no particular beauty but some pretensions to education. She was a little yellow-haired person, with a poor complexion, and a dumpy figure, but an extremely seductive voice and manner. She seemed to be perpetually imploring compassion. She despised her husband, found other admirers, entered on a reckless course of extravagance, was beaten by her lovers, ruined Delaunay, and poisoned herself just at the moment when it seemed that he must become aware of all her iniquities : he had remained blind throughout. Even her death and the subsequent discoveries did not destroy his love for her ; he sank into a deep melancholy, and, within a year’s time, took a fatal dose of prussic acid also. Such was the story of Delaunay. We can imagine Rudyard Kipling or Guy de Maupassant rattling it off for us in a dozen pages, finishing up the apparently commonplace narrative with a

surprise and a shudder. It is not the kind of story on which we would expect a masterpiece of fiction to be based; one of those books which can only be achieved by a giant.

In one of Flaubert's letters, he remarks that the classics and the Middle Ages gave us the cuckold, who was a comic character; modern romance gives us adultery, which is a serious business; we must not then be surprised to find that in his hands the story of Delaunay is a very grave matter.

We are introduced to the hero—for if the book has a hero, it is poor Bovary—on his first arrival at school, an overgrown, gawky, neglected lad, who had to take a place among boys smaller than himself. The usual awkwardness of a new boy was considerably aggravated by the fact that he possessed a new cap. 'It was one of those head-pieces of the composite order, in which are to be discovered the elements of the bear-skin, the Lancer's chapska, the wide-awake, the otter-skin, and the cotton night-cap; one of those poor things, in a word, whose dumb ugliness has depths of expression like the face of an idiot. Egg-like and puffed out with whalebone, it began with three circular sausages, then, separated by a red band, came alternate lozenges of velvet and rabbit-skin; after that a kind of bag, which ended in a cardboard polygon covered with embroidery in elaborate needlework, from which hung at the end of a long thin cord a little cross-bar in gold thread by way of tassel; it was new; the peak was shiny.'

—After this, a description of the mother of Bovary is superfluous; such a cap indicates maternal affection in large quantities, free from the control of tact and taste. We are not surprised to learn that the new boy is an only son—his father was a worthless, retired army-surgeon, who had used his dashing appearance to secure as his wife a middle-aged, middle-class woman with money. The lady, rudely wakened

from her dreams of love, took the management of her affairs into her own hands, and concentrated all her affections upon her boy, whom she did her best to spoil, and sent to school too late.

In spite of the unpromising commencement of his school career, young Bovary escaped the extremity of horrors which might be expected to attend on so unprepossessing a youth ; owing to a certain unobtrusive strength and simplicity, which disarmed his schoolfellows, and an aimless dogged industry, which won the respect of his teachers. As he had been sent to school too late, so he was withdrawn too early, and consigned to solitary lodgings, provisioned from home, in which he pursued the study of medicine. When the time came he failed to pass his examination ; the time which should have been given to study had been devoted to dominoes ; his very vices were profoundly meaningless and contemptible. On a second attempt, having learned the answers to a large number of questions by heart under the direction of a skilled coach, Bovary was more fortunate. Then came the question of placing him. His mother found a suitable practice at the small town of Tostes, near Rouen, and a suitable wife in the person of a middle-aged widow of Dieppe, reputed to be provided with means, and to whose hand there were several aspirants. 'To attain her ends Mme. Bovary was obliged to eject them all, and she even showed remarkable skill in counteracting the wiles of a pork-butcher, who was supported by the priests.' The marriage did not bring Bovary much satisfaction. 'His wife was the master ; he had to say this, not to say that, before people ; to fast on Fridays, dress as she thought good, dun the patients who did not pay up, according to her orders.' 'In the evenings, when Charles came back, she put her long thin arms out from under the sheets, passed them around his



neck, and having made him sit on the edge of the bed, began to tell him her troubles: he forgot her, he loved another! People had been quite right to tell her that she would be unhappy. And she would finish up by asking him for some syrup for her cough and a little more love.' Nor was the good lady without some reason for her jealousy. A well-to-do farmer in the neighbourhood, a widower living with an only daughter, chanced to break his leg; Bovary was called in and successfully reduced the fracture—a very simple one. The father was astounded at the skill of his medical man, the daughter no less so: his visits became unnecessarily frequent. At this juncture it was suddenly discovered that the widow of Dieppe had exaggerated the amount of her property; a terrific scene ensued between her and Bovary's mother. 'Eight days afterwards, as she was hanging out linen in her courtyard, she was taken with a spitting of blood, and the following day, while Charles had his back turned to draw the window curtains, she said: "Oh, my God!" uttered a sigh, and fainted. She was dead. What an amazing thing!' 'When all was ended at the cemetery, Charles went home. He found nobody downstairs; he went up to the first floor, in their room he saw her dress still hanging at the foot of the bed; then leaning against the bureau, he remained till evening lost in a dream of sorrow. After all, she had loved him.'

The Père Rouault, grateful for the restoration of his health, took pains to comfort the young widower; he had himself passed through misfortune, and Charles became a frequent visitor at Les Bertaux. The inevitable duly followed. Charles married Mlle. Rouault. The young lady was distinguished by an elegance not to be expected in the daughter of a country farmer: she had been brought up in a convent at Rouen in a manner rather above her station.

When her father first took her to school, they had dined in a restaurant where the plates were ornamented with edifying scenes from the life of Mademoiselle de la Vallière and Louis XIV. The routine of the convent at first charmed her. 'When she went to confession she invented little sins in order to stay longer on her knees in the dusk, with her hands joined, her face close to the grating and the whispering priest.' 'Instead of following the mass she used to look at the sacred pictures in her book with their azure borders, and she loved the sick lamb, the heart pierced with pointed arrows, or Jesus falling under the cross as He walks. She tried by way of mortification to remain a whole day without eating. She racked her brains for some vow to accomplish.' But the convent introduced her also to other than religious emotions. Every month an old maid used to come and spend a week there, overhauling and repairing the linen; she was the daughter of a noble family ruined by the Revolution, and was protected by the Archbishop, owing to the devotion of her noble ancestors to the Church. She not only knew all the current gossip, and was a mine of songs and tales of old-world gallantries, but she also smuggled romances in the pocket of her apron. 'There was nothing but love, lovers, ladies, persecuted maidens swooning in lonely pavilions, postilions killed at every relay, horses falling dead on every page, sombre forests, agitations of the heart, oaths, sobs, tears, and kisses, boats and moonlights, nightingales in thickets, gentlemen brave as lions, gentle as lambs, virtuous as nobody ever was, always well dressed, and weeping like the urns on tombstones.' Her school-fellows used to bring copies of the *Keepsake* back after the holidays, 'full of portraits of lovely ladies in luxurious surroundings, of landscapes in which palms, pines, fir-trees, lions, tigers, minarets, Roman ruins,

crouching camels were framed in a well-kept virgin forest, through which was seen a moonlit lake, with floating swans.'

The very songs which she learned helped to intensify the romantic unrealities of the world of her imagination.

'When her mother died, she wept abundantly for the first few days. She had a funeral card made for her with the hair of the defunct, and, in a letter which she sent to Les Bertaux, full of melancholy reflections on life, she begged to be buried hereafter in the same tomb. Her worthy father thought she was ill, and came to see her. Emma was inwardly delighted to feel herself suddenly arrived at that rare ideal of pallid existence which mediocre hearts never reach.' In due time her grief evaporated, and then she began to disappoint the nuns, who had hoped to retain her. 'This mind positive in the midst of its enthusiasms, which had loved the Church for its flowers, music for the words of songs, literature for its excitement of the emotions, rose in rebellion before the mysteries of faith, and in the same way was still more irritated by the conventual discipline, a thing antipathetic to her constitution.' She was removed from the convent, and went to keep house for her father; pleased at first with the responsibility and the management of servants, she soon began to feel herself buried in the country, and regretted her convent.

Charles Bovary had appeared to her as a man of science, a being quite superior to the coarse rustics, whose awkward addresses were the only possible interruption to the monotony of her life at the farm. She saw in him a deliverer.

The marriage was celebrated with a prodigious feasting, a riot of the material side of life, violently contrasting with the moonlights of Emma's romantic imagining. The honeymoon soon waned, had been wanting in flavour; there had



been no travelling in those operatic landscapes of which her mind was full; perhaps this was the cause of the failure. 'It seemed to her that certain spots on the earth must produce happiness, like a plant peculiar to one soil, and which grows badly anywhere else. Why could she not lean on the balcony of a Swiss chalet, or harbour her melancholy in a Scotch bothie, with a husband clothed in a black velvet coat with long skirts, wearing soft boots, a pointed hat, and lace cuffs?'

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Charles, on the contrary, was enraptured; each of Emma's little domestic refinements surprised him more than the last; she even talked of finger-glasses for dessert. He was never weary of watching her draw, hearing her play the piano, 'the quicker her fingers ran over the keys, the more astounded he was.' Meanwhile his conversation was not equally interesting to his wife; 'when at Rouen he had never cared to go to the theatre to see the actors from Paris; he could neither swim, nor fence, nor use a pistol; and then his boots were appalling in shape and size. She recited impassioned verses to him in the garden by moonlight, sang melancholy slow music; found herself afterwards as calm as before those experiments, and Charles no more amorous than usual; before long she began to ask herself why she had ever married.'

These mournful reveries were interrupted by an event. The Marquis de Vaubyessard, a local magnate contemplating political life, determined to give a ball. Charles had attended him for some small ailment successfully; he had called, seen Madame Bovary, found that her manners were good; she and Bovary were invited to the ball, and to spend the night at Vaubyessard.

The stateliness of the house, its historic pictures, an aged duke reputed to have been the lover of Marie Antoinette,



inclined Madame Bovary to believe that here was her world of romance realised ; she discovered herself to be better-looking than many of the ladies, at least as well-mannered. Nor was there wanting a suggestion of moral corruption ; she saw a lady skilfully pass a little note to a gentleman, she waltzed with a Vicomte, became giddy, found herself leaning in his arms. The next day on the way home, while stopping to re-arrange the harness, Charles picked up an embroidered cigar-case. The Vicomte had shortly before passed them on horseback ; doubtless the case was his, it was adorned with a coronet. Emma annexed and kept this cigar-case.

After this Madame Bovary gave way to a deeper melancholy ; she spent her time reading the works of Eugène Sue, of Balzac, of Georges Sand. Paris floated before her mind ; she even bought a map of the town, and amused herself with making imaginary expeditions. She added to the small elegancies of her establishment, 'bought a blotting-book, stationery case, pen-tray, envelopes, although she had no one to write to ; she wished to travel, or return to the convent ; she longed at one and the same time to die, and to live at Paris.'

After a while she began to neglect everything, sank into an aimless sadness, became irritable : 'some days she chattered with a feverish exaltation ; this state of excitement was all of a sudden succeeded by a long torpor, and she remained without speaking or moving. She was then brought round by sprinkling a bottle of eau-de-Cologne on her arms.'

She continually complained of Tostes, and Charles therefore imagined that the place was unsuitable to her health ; he looked out for another practice, and found it in a large village or small town called Yonville-l'Abbaye. In making preparations for her departure Emma came across her wedding bouquet. She burned it.

English travellers who know the appearance of the country round Amiens need no description of the melancholy landscape which surrounds Yonville-l'Abbaye; the character of the sluggish Somme extends to its tributaries and the adjacent streams. For a picture of the place itself we need not go far from home; Thame, Stony Stratford, Olney, Calne, Devizes, Leominster, and hundreds of other English country towns, are neither more nor less than Yonville. The place was duly provided with a church, a priest, a smithy, market-house, mayor, hotel, restaurant, lawyer, (but its chief glory was its chemist and druggist: 'what attracts the eye most is the shop of M. Homais, opposite the Golden Lion. Above all, when its large lamp is lit in the evening, and the green and red bottles that embellish its front throw their twin illuminations far away on the ground, like Bengal lights, and the shadow of the druggist leaning on his desk is seen between them. His house from top to bottom is placarded with inscriptions written in English hand, round-hand, in large type;) "Vichy Water, Seltzer Water, Barèges Water, Cleansing Rubbers, Raspail's Medicines, Arabian Racahout, Darcet's Pastilles, Regnault's Electuary, Bandages, Baths, Medicated Chocolate," etc., and the sign, which occupies the whole width of the shop, bears in letters of gold: "Homais, Pharmacist." Then at the back of the shop, behind the great scales riveted to the counter, the word "Laboratory" is revealed above a glass door, which once more repeats half-way up "Homais" in gilt letters on a black ground.'

Yonville is twenty-four miles from Rouen, and every day an omnibus used to run backwards and forwards from the Golden Lion, of which the widow Lefrançois was proprietress. On the evening on which the Bovary family were to arrive (M. Homais awaited them at the inn: 'a man in

green leather slippers, somewhat marked with small-pox, wearing a green velvet cap with a gold tassel, was warming his back at the fire. His face expressed nothing but self-complacency.)

The company assembled at the Golden Lion <sup>as my</sup> included Binet, the collector of taxes, an ex-carbineer, a very methodical personage, who spent most of his time at a turning-lathe, and M. Léon Dupuis, a young man lodging with Homais, and articled clerk to M. Guillaumin, the lawyer. These persons dined there regularly. On the arrival of the Hironnelle with the Bovarys, dinner was at once served; young Dupuis and Homais joined the party of the new-comers; Homais asking permission to wear his cap, for fear of neuralgia. He proceeded forthwith to introduce Bovary to his new practice: 'for the rest the prosecution of Medicine is not very troublesome in our country; for the state of the roads permits the use of the carriage, and, generally speaking, the people pay satisfactorily, the agriculturists being well off. In the strictly medical connection, apart from the ordinary cases of enteritis, bronchitis, biliary affections, etc., we have from time to time intermittent fevers at the period of harvest, but in general few grave illnesses, nothing specially to be noticed, if it is not a large number of cold humours, which are doubtless due to the deplorable hygienic conditions of the dwellings of our peasantry. Ah! you will find many prejudices to contend against, M. Bovary, much obstinate adherence to routine, against which all the efforts of your science will daily have to stumble; for recourse is still had to prayers, relics, the clergyman, rather than come naturally to the physician or the druggist. The climate however is not, so to say, bad, and we even reckon in our community some nonagenarians. The thermometer (I have myself

taken observations) goes down in winter to seven degrees Fahrenheit, and in the hot season reaches twenty-five to thirty degrees Centigrade at the most, which gives us twenty-four degrees Réaumur as a maximum, otherwise fifty-four Fahrenheit (English reckoning), not more!—(note, 30 *Centigrade is really 85 Fahrenheit*—Homais uses his figures at random)—and, in fact, we are sheltered from the north winds by the forest of Argueil on one side, from the west winds on the other by the hillside of Saint-Jean; and yet this heat, which is caused by the watery vapour given off by the river, and the presence of considerable numbers of cattle in our meadows who exhale, as you know, much ammonia, that is to say, azote, hydrogen and oxygen (no, azote and hydrogen only), and which, drawing to itself the “humus” of the earth, confounding all these different emanations, uniting them in one bundle, so to speak, and combining of itself with the electricity spread in the atmosphere, where there is any, might in the long-run, as in tropical countries, engender insalubrious miasmas. This heat, I say, is tempered precisely on the side from which it comes, or rather from which it would come, that is to say on the south side, by the south-east winds, which, being cooled of themselves by passing over the Seine, reach us sometimes all of a sudden like blasts from Russia.’

(Meanwhile M. Léon Dupuis and Madame Bovary have discovered that they have the same taste in sunsets, in books, the same discontent with the things that immediately surround them.) ‘It is so pleasant,’ observed the clerk, ‘among the disillusionments of life to be able to repose upon the ideal of noble characters, of pure affections, and of pictures of happiness. As for me, living here out of the world, it is my only distraction, but Yonville offers so few resources!’



‘Like Tostes, doubtless,’ replied Emma, ‘and so I always subscribed to a lending library.’

‘If Madame Bovary will do me the honour to make use of it,’ said the druggist, who had just heard the last words, ‘I have myself a library at her disposal composed of the best authors, Voltaire, Rousseau, Delille, Walter Scott, the Echoes of the Magazines, etc., and I am further in receipt of several periodicals, among them the *Rouen Beacon* daily, having the advantage of being its correspondent for the centres of Buchy, Forges, Neufchâtel, Yonville, and the neighbourhood.’ In course of time the new arrivals withdrew from the fascinations of the Golden Lion and Homais to their own house, where, although they found everything in confusion, Emma hoped to enjoy a better future. It could not be worse than the past.

Things, however, did not go particularly well at first with either member of the Bovary household at Yonville. Clients were some time in appearing, and the interested friendship of M. Homais failed to compensate for their absence. Though M. Homais was the victim of an irresistible impulse to concern himself with other people’s affairs in general, he had a particular reason for being friendly to Bovary; he had infringed the law which forbids unlicensed persons to exercise medical functions, and had been comminated by the Procureur du Roi at Rouen.)

Meanwhile Madame Bovary became a mother; she had wished for a son, who should be strong and swarthy, and called George, but fate determined that her first-born should be a daughter. She consoled herself for the disappointment by seeking for a sufficiently romantic name for the infant, such as Amanda, Galsuinda, Yseult, or Leocadia. ‘M. Homais, for his part, had a predilection for all those names which recalled a great man, an illustrious action, or

a noble thought, and it was in obedience to this system that he had baptized his own four children; thus, Napoleon represented Glory, Franklin Liberty, Irene was perhaps a concession to romanticism, but Athaliah was certainly a homage to the most immortal masterpiece of the French stage.' Eventually, the child was called Bertha, Madame Bovary having heard this name addressed by the Marchioness to a young lady at Vaubyessard.

The child was put out to nurse, after the French fashion; the foster-mother, Mère Rolet, a labourer's wife, lived in the outskirts of Yonville, and Madame Bovary, on her convalescence, paid a visit to her child. She happened to encounter M. Léon Dupuis on her way, whose escort she accepted. From this time Madame Bovary became the divinity of M. Léon's dreams; she had also awakened sentiments of tender adoration in the breast of Justin, a youth distantly related to M. Homais, who fulfilled many and various functions in the establishment of that luminary of science.

(Homais' benevolent attentions to the house of Bovary continued; he would come in during dinner, and seat himself at the side of the table. 'He used to ask the doctor for news of his patients, and the latter would consult him as to the probabilities of payment. Then they would talk of "what there was in the paper." Homais, by this hour of the day, knew it almost by heart, and he repeated it, word for word, with the leaders of the journalists, and all the stories of disasters that had happened in France or abroad. But, the subject running dry, he did not refrain from giving vent to some observations on the dishes that he saw. Sometimes even, half-rising, he would delicately point out to Madame Bovary the tenderest morsel, or, turning to the maid, addressed advice to her on the manipulation of hashes and the hygiene of seasonings; he talked aromas,

osmazone, juices, and gelatine in a way to make one giddy. His head, moreover, being more full of recipes than his shop was of bottles, Homais excelled in making quantities of preserves, vinegars, and sweet liqueurs; he knew, too, all the last inventions in economical stoves, with the art of keeping cheeses and doctoring sick wines.'

On Sunday evenings Madame Homais was 'at home.' The Bovarys attended regularly. Léon also; there were seldom other guests. After a round game, Charles and Homais would play at dominoes, while Léon read poetry to Emma. Thus there gradually grew up confidential relations between the young clerk and the doctor's wife; she took a maternal interest in his affairs, presented him with a warm rug; meanwhile Léon tortured himself to find a suitable opportunity to declare his passion. At this period Madame Bovary made the acquaintance of a certain M. Lheureux, a haberdasher and upholsterer of Yonville, who not only offered his goods but long credit; he would even advance money, if necessary. For the present Emma kept him at a distance.

Eventually Madame Bovary divined the passion of her young admirer, and discovered that her own heart was also touched; she proceeded to indulge herself in the luxury of a romantic virtue.

'She heard steps on the staircase; it was Léon. She got up, and took the first of a pile of dusters from the table, which were there to be hemmed. She seemed very busy when he appeared.

'The conversation was desultory, Madame Bovary dropping it every minute; while he stayed there entirely awkward. Seated on a low chair near the fireplace, he turned the ivory workcase in his fingers; she pushed her needle on from time to time, smoothed out the creases in the stuff with her nail. She did not speak; he held his tongue, captivated by her silence, as he would have been by her words.

“Poor fellow!” thought she.

“Why doesn’t she like me?” he asked himself.

Léon, however, ended by saying that he must one of these days go to Rouen on office business. “Your subscription at the music-seller’s is out; shall I renew it?”

“No,” she replied.

“Why?”

“Because——” and tightening her lips, she slowly drew out a long needleful of grey thread.

This work irritated Léon. Emma’s fingers seemed to get sore at the end from it; a gallant phrase came into his head, but he did not venture on it.

“Then you give it up?” he resumed.

“What?” said she sharply. “The music? Oh, heavens! Yes! Have I not my house to keep, my husband to attend to, a thousand things, numbers of duties, which come before that?”

She looked at the clock. Charles was late. Then she played the part of the anxious wife. Two or three times even she repeated:

“He is so good!”

The clerk had an affection for M. Bovary. But this tenderness in his direction surprised him disagreeably: none the less he continued his praises, which, he said, he heard everybody utter, above all the chemist.

“Ah! he is a fine man,” resumed Emma.

“Surely,” replied the clerk.

And he began to speak of Madame Homais, whose neglected toilette generally formed a subject of amusement for them.

“What does that matter?” interrupted Emma. “A good mother does not concern herself about her dress.”

Then she relapsed into silence.

It was the same on the following day; her conversation, her manners, everything changed. She was observed to take her housekeeping more to heart, to go to church regularly, and to rule her servant with greater strictness.

She took Bertha away from the nurse. Félicité used to bring her in, when there were visitors, and Madame Bovary would undress her, in order to show her limbs. She declared



she adored children ; she was her comfort, her joy, her folly, and she accompanied her caresses with lyrical overflowings, which would have reminded any but the good folk of Yonville of *La Sachette* in *Notre Dame de Paris*.'

As she devoted herself to her household and her child, so Madame Bovary also devoted herself to her husband. Charles was never so well looked after as at this period. But a reaction followed, and the nervous attacks returned. Emma again believed herself to be miserable.

One evening the tinkling of the Angelus recalled her convent days to her ; she rose and walked to the church, 'longing for devotion in some form, no matter what, provided she might absorb her whole soul in it, that in it her whole existence might disappear.'

In the churchyard a number of boys were playing ; they were a confirmation class waiting for the priest.

"Where is the clergyman?" Madame Bovary asked a young boy, who was amusing himself with shaking the turnstile on its slack pivot.

"He is just coming," he replied.

'In fact the door of the presbytery grated ; the Abbé Bour-  
nisien appeared ; the children fled into the church headlong.

"Those rascals!" muttered the ecclesiastic ; "always the same!"

'And picking up a tattered catechism, over which he had just stumbled :

"They respect nothing !"

'But as soon as he perceived Madame Bovary :

"Excuse me," said he, "I did not recognise you."

'He stuffed the catechism into his pocket, and stopped, continuing to swing the heavy key of the sacristy between two fingers.

'The glow of the setting sun, which fell full on his face, made the stuff of his cassock look shabby, shiny at the elbows, as it was, frayed at the edges. Spots of grease and snuff followed the line of little buttons on his broad chest ; and they

became more numerous the further they were from his collar, where rested the abundant folds of his red skin, spotted with yellow blotches, which disappeared in the coarse greyish hairs on his chin. He had just finished dinner, and breathed noisily.

“How are you?” he added.

“Not very well,” replied Emma; “I am out of health.”

“Well, well! So am I,” replied the clergyman. “This first heat is astoundingly enervating, is it not? Still, you know, it cannot be otherwise; we are born to suffering, as St. Paul says. But what does M. Bovary think about it?”

“He!” she said, with a contemptuous gesture.

“What!” resumed the good fellow in amazement; “he does not prescribe for you?”

“Ah!” said Emma; “it is not earthly remedies that I require.”

But the clergyman from time to time looked into the church, where all the boys, kneeling in a row, kept shoving one another with their shoulders, and falling over like a pack of cards.

“I should like to know . . .” she resumed.

“Wait, wait, Riboudet,” cried the ecclesiastic in a wrathful voice, “I’ll come and warm your ears for you, naughty scamp!”

Then turning to Emma:

“It is the son of Boudet the carpenter; his parents are well off, and let him have his own way, and yet he would learn quickly, if he chose, for he is full of understanding. And I, sometimes by way of a joke, I just call him Riboudet (after the hill by which you go up to Maromme from Rouen), and I even say: Mont Riboudet, ha! ha! Mont Riboudet! The other day I told His Grace this joke, and he laughed at it . . . he deigned to laugh at it.”

Worthy fellow though he was, the Abbé Bournisien was not the kind of ecclesiastic to comprehend poor Emma’s troubles, and the interview ended in disappointment. After the good clergyman had taken a rapid disciplinary excursion into the church:

“Come,” said he, when he had returned to Emma, unfold-

ing his large bandana handkerchief, a corner of which he put between his teeth, "the farmers are much to be pitied!"

"There are others too," she replied.

"Certainly! the artisans in the towns, for instance."

"It is not they that . . ."

"Pardon me! I have known poor mothers, virtuous women, veritable saints, I assure you, who were even short of bread."

"But those," resumed Emma (and the corners of her mouth twitched as she spoke), "those, M. Bournisien, who have bread, and who have not . . ."

"Winter firing," said the priest.

"Oh! what does that matter?"

"What does that matter? I must say it seems to me that when one is well warmed, well fed . . . for indeed . . ."

"My God! my God!" she sighed.

"You are in pain?" said he, approaching with an anxious air; "it is indigestion, doubtless? You must go home, Mme. Bovary, and drink a little tea; that will strengthen you, or perhaps a glass of cold water with some brown sugar."

"Why?"

"And she had the air of some one waking from a dream.

"You were passing your hand over your forehead. I thought you felt a giddiness."

And so the conversation ended. As Emma walked away, she heard the clergyman and his confirmation class: 'Are you a Christian?' 'Yes, I am a Christian.' 'What is a Christian?' 'He is one who being baptized—baptized—baptized—'

On her return home Madame Bovary gave way to her irritable nerves so far as to knock over the unfortunate Bertha, by this time in the toddling stage, so that the child's face was cut against the corner of the table; then she was seized with a furious attack of maternal tenderness, and lied about the cause of the accident.

M. Léon left Yonville without declaring his passion to Emma, without divining that it was returned: he went

to Paris to finish his course of legal study there. ( On the occasion of his departure the great Homais gave expression to the views of a provincial on the subject of the capital. )

“Come! come,” said the chemist, smacking his tongue, “stylish dinners at the restaurant, masked balls, champagne—there will be fine goings on, I assure you.”

“I do not think he will go to the bad,” objected Bovary.

“Nor I,” replied Homais smartly, “although he will certainly have to follow the rest at the risk of being taken for a Jesuit. And you don’t know the life that these rascals lead in the Quartier Latin with the actresses! Moreover, the students are very well received at Paris. If they have some little talent for making themselves agreeable, they are admitted to the best society, and there are even great ladies in the Faubourg Saint Germain who fall in love with them, which in the end gives them the opportunity of making very advantageous marriages.”

“But,” said the doctor, “I am afraid for him that . . . there . . .”

“You are right,” interrupted the apothecary, “there is a reverse to the medal! And one must continually have one’s hand over one’s breeches-pocket there. Thus: suppose you are in a public garden, a somebody presents himself, well dressed, even wearing a riband, and the sort of person one would take for a diplomatist; he addresses you; you talk; he is insinuating, offers you a pinch of snuff, or picks up your hat for you. Then a closer connection is established; he takes you to a café, invites you to his country house, introduces you to all kinds of acquaintances between two glasses of wine; and three parts of the time it is only to plunder your purse for you, or lead you into vicious courses.”

The departure of Léon left Madame Bovary in a very miserable condition; she tried to console herself with the cultivation of her tastes: bought herself an elegant blue cashmere dress, and a bright-coloured scarf; took to dressing her hair in a variety of different ways, began to learn Italian, began to read philosophy, began to study history,



began an infinity of things, all of which she abandoned. Charles became anxious about her health ; he invited his mother to pay a visit ; the mother-in-law and daughter-in-law quarrelled.

One day a country gentleman, who lived just outside Yonville, brought one of his farm men to be bled by Bovary. Justin from the chemist's shop, who had been asked to help, fainted at the sight of blood, so did the patient ; Madame Bovary herself was forced to come to assist in the surgery, and was thus introduced to M. Rodolph Boulanger.

'He was at that time thirty-four years old ; he was of an animal temperament and clear intelligence, having moreover had much to do with women, and understanding them well. This one had appeared to him good-looking ; so he continued to think of her and her husband.

'“I imagine he is very stupid. She is doubtless tired of him. He has dirty nails, and has not shaved for three days. While he trots after his patients, she remains darning stockings. And she is bored, would like to live in town, dance the polka every evening ! Poor little woman ! She gasps for love like a carp on a kitchen-table for water. Three words of gallantry, and she would adore one, I am sure of it ; it would be tender, charming ! ! ! ! Yes, but how to get rid of her afterwards ?”

Eventually this small country squire made up his mind to try the experiment, and the occasion on which he avowed his passion was that of the great Agricultural Show, which was held at Yonville ; not without some previous working of the oracle on the part of Homais, through the medium of the *Rouen Beacon*.

(At the Agricultural Show Flaubert brings together the two threads which run through the whole book ; on the one side, we have Homais victorious, and the whole atmosphere in which such persons live and thrive is in full vibration

around us ; on the other, Emma's romantic aspirations are satisfied : she finds herself in possession of a lover, wealthy, well-dressed, good-looking. While the notables are haranguing the assembled agriculturists in the approved style, Rodolph equally in the approved style is stimulating the romantic passions of Emma. Both Rodolph's love-making and the political rhapsodies of the officials are alike stale, commonplace, in every way contemptible. The whole thing is summed up as follows :—

‘M. Derozerays got up, beginning another discourse. His speech was perhaps not so flowery as that of the Councillor ; but it was recommended by a more positive character in its style—that is to say, by more special knowledge and more elevated reflections. Accordingly the praise of the Government occupied less room in it ; religion and agriculture more. The connection between the one and the other was explained, and how they had always united in the cause of civilisation. Rodolph was talking to Madame Bovary of dreams, presentiments, magnetism. Going back to the cradle of society, the orator depicted to you those savage times when men lived on nuts in the depths of forests. Then they had abandoned the skins of wild beasts, put on clothes, ploughed furrows, planted the vine. Was this last an advantage ? Was not this discovery after all attended by serious drawbacks ? M. Derozerays propounded that problem. From magnetism Rodolph had gradually come to affinities, and while the President was quoting Cincinnatus at his plough, Diocletian planting his cabbages, and the Emperors of China inaugurating the year with sowing, the young man was explaining to the young wife that these irresistible attractions were due to some anterior existence.

“So, take our own case,” said he, “why did we come to know one another ? What chance willed that ? It is doubtless because our special inclinations, like two rivers, which flow to meet, had driven us through space to one another.”

‘And he seized her hand ; she did not draw it back.’

The description of the Agricultural Show ends with the

account which Homais wrote of it, and published in the *Rouen Beacon*.

The whole of this chapter, which alike in its design and its execution lifts Flaubert above the level of the mere novelist, (in which the commonplaces of passion are artfully contrasted, and associated with the commonplaces of middle-class ambition, the result being a full, searching satire,) unsurpassed in any literature, would have been cut out, if Flaubert had followed the advice of Maxime Ducamp and his co-editor of the *Revue de Paris*, Laurence Pichat. It is true that this is a very different thing from the story of Delaunay; as Flaubert himself was a very different person from Balzac, or Georges Sand, or Alphonse Daudet, or Cherbuliez.

Before long Madame Bovary had entirely abandoned herself to Rodolph; but in the end mere adultery proved to her no more satisfactory than marriage: she began to urge Rodolph to run away with her; meanwhile her romantics had begun to frighten him, and he did run away—without her.

The result was a brain-fever, from which she recovered to encounter the pecuniary difficulties in which she had by this time allowed Lheureux to entangle her.

(During the course of her intrigue with Rodolph, Homais had on his side debauched poor Charles. There was an ostler at the Golden Lion, one Hippolyte, who suffered from the deformity of a club-foot. Homais had read somewhere in a newspaper of a method of curing this; he hunted up references, turned out books, and though Hippolyte was as active as a hare, persuaded him to allow Bovary to operate. The operation failed; the leg became gangrened and had to be amputated. The ignominy of the failure rested with Charles, who had further to submit to the contempt of his wife.)

Emma's recovery from illness seemed to restore happiness to the household. The Abbé Bournisien, who had been summoned at the crisis of her illness, used to come to drink cider in the arbour, and even Binet proved sociable. Lagardy being advertised to sing at Rouen shortly, Homais advised a visit to the theatre as a means of cheering the convalescent; Charles at once fell in with his plan; Emma, after showing a little reluctance, consented.

The opera was 'Lucia di Lammermoor'; all Emma's romance was at once awakened: the personality of the singer himself, reputed to travel with three mistresses, was exciting. M. Léon Dupuis, now in an office at Rouen, having finished his course at Paris, happened to be present at the performance; he saw and recognised the Bovary party, came to speak to them. Charles was delighted to meet his old friend again: Emma was so much restored by the opera that he suggested she should stay another day and go to the theatre again; M. Léon would escort her. This plan was agreed to.

The following day Bovary returned to Yonville, but Emma remained at Rouen. Léon called on her. He was no longer the timid youth; he had had experience at Paris; he re-opened the chapter of sentiment at once. Emma held him at a distance, while looking back sentimentally to their former friendship; she agreed, however, to meet him the next day at eleven o'clock *at the Cathedral*.

As soon as he was gone she wrote an interminable letter withdrawing from the assignation; then remembered that she had no address whereto it could be sent, and decided to give it him herself at the Cathedral.

Léon rose early, put on his best clothes, submitted himself to the hairdresser, bought some violets, arrived at the Cathedral before the time; boldly entered the church.

'The Swiss (verger in a very glorious uniform) was at that



moment standing on the threshold in the middle of the north door beneath the "Dancing Miriam," his plume on his head, rapier at his calf, cane in his hand, more majestic than a cardinal, and shining like a monstrance.

'He advanced towards Léon, and with that smile of coaxing benignity which ecclesiastics adopt when they question children :

"The gentleman doubtless is a stranger? He would like to see the curiosities of the church?"

"No," said the other.

'He first made the circuit of the aisles. Then he went to look out into the square. Emma was not coming. He went back to the choir. . . . The Swiss at a distance was inwardly indignant at this individual, who presumed to admire the Cathedral alone. He seemed to be conducting himself in a monstrous fashion, to be robbing him in some sort, and almost to be committing a sacrilege.

'But a rustle of silk on the pavement, the brim of a hat, a black mantle. . . . It was she! Léon rose and ran to meet her.

'Emma was pale; she walked fast.

"Read!" said she, giving him a paper. . . . "Oh no!"

'And she sharply withdrew her hand to go to the Lady Chapel, where, kneeling against a chair, she began to pray.

'The young man was irritated at this whim of devotion; then he experienced a certain charm in seeing her thus lost in prayer in the middle of an assignation, like an Andalusian Marchioness; then he was annoyed, for she seemed never likely to stop.

'Emma prayed, or rather strove to pray, hoping that some sudden resolution would descend to her from heaven; and to attract the divine succour she filled her eyes with the splendours of the altar, she breathed the perfume of the white flowers displayed in the great vases, and listened to the silence of the church, which only increased the tumult of her own heart.

'Then she rose, and was departing when the Swiss came up quickly, saying :

"The lady is doubtless a stranger? She wishes to see the curiosities of the church?"

"No!" cried the clerk.

“Why not?” replied she.

‘For her tottering virtue clutched at the Virgin, at the sculptures, at the tombs, at every vantage.

‘Then in order to proceed methodically, the Swiss conducted them to the entrance near the square, and there showing them with his cane a great circle of black stones in the pavement without inscription or carving :

“There,” said he majestically, “is the circumference of the great bell of Amboise. It weighed forty thousand pounds. It had not its equal in Europe. The workmen who cast it died of delight. . . .”

“Let us go,” said Léon.’

But he was not to have his way ; the triumphant Swiss drove them round the tombs and altars, and was on the point of forcing them to ascend the spire, when Léon dragged Madame Bovary out of the Cathedral and hailed a cab, just in time to escape the panting Swiss, who was in hot pursuit with a bundle of some twenty volumes. They were works ‘which treated of the Cathedral.’ A delay in the arrival of the cab gave him time to implore them at least to go out by the north door, and see ‘The Resurrection,’ ‘The Last Judgment,’ ‘The Paradise,’ ‘The King David,’ and ‘The Damned in the Flames of Hell.’

At first Madame Bovary objected to embarking in the cab on the ground of propriety, but upon being told by Léon that this was usual in Paris she allowed her scruples to be overcome.

That vehicle travelled through the whole of Rouen and the outskirts.

‘It was seen at Saint Pol, at Lescure, at Mont Gargon, at la Rouge-Mare, and in the square of Gaillard-bois ; in the Rue Maladrerie, Rue Dinanderie, in front of Saint-Romain, Saint Vivien, Saint Maclou, Saint Nicaise ; before the Custom House, at the Basse Vieille Tour, at the Trois Pipes, and the Memorial Cemetery. From time to time the driver on his box threw

despairing glances at the public-houses. He did not understand the mania for locomotion which imposed on these individuals so strong an objection to a halt. He sometimes tried to stop, and immediately he heard wrathful exclamations behind him. Then he whipped up his two jades to the best of his power, heated as they were, and went on, without taking any notice of jolts, running over the curbstones here and there, caring for nothing, demoralised, and almost crying with thirst, fatigue, and desperation.

‘On the quay in the middle of the trucks and barrels, in the streets, at the corners of the pavements, the trades-folk opened great wondering eyes at this thing, so extraordinary in the province—a carriage with its blinds drawn, thus continually appearing, closer than a tomb, and swaying like a ship.

‘Once in the middle of the day, out in the country, at the moment when the sun shone its strongest on the old plated lamps, a bare hand passed under the little yellow curtains and threw away fragments of paper, which scattered in the wind, and settled some way off like white butterflies on a field of red clover in flower.

‘Then about six o’clock the carriage stopped in a bye-street in the Beauvoisine quarter, and a lady got out of it, who walked away with her veil down without turning her head.’

Never was the romance of adultery treated with more contempt than in this passage; the Swiss, the cabman, the trades-folk in the streets, all combine to drag us down from the sphere of moonlights and troubadours and elective affinities to the commonplace details of vulgar life.

To the editors of the *Revue de Paris* the wanderings of this cab and the sorrows of its driver appeared unsuitable for their periodical, and they suppressed the incident; Flaubert insisted upon inserting a note to the effect that a passage had been withdrawn from publication by the *Review*, and thereby caused himself to be suspected of having written in a very different strain. The suppression of this passage is a further indication of the complete blindness of Ducamp

and Pichat to the real character of the work which they were publishing. The incident did not belong to the story of Delaunay, and was therefore incomprehensible to Ducamp.

Madame Bovary was met on her return to Yonville by her maid Félicité, who brought a message that she was required at once at the house of M. Homais.

‘The village was as silent as usual. At the corners of the streets there were little crimson heaps steaming, for it was the period of jam-making, and everybody in Yonville made his preserves on the same day. But all admired a much larger heap in front of the chemist’s shop, which surpassed all the others with the superiority that a manufactory ought to have over the kitchen ranges of ordinary folk, the satisfaction of a public want over that of mere private needs.

‘She went in. The great arm-chair was overturned, and even the *Rouen Beacon* was lying on the ground trailing between two pestles. She opened the passage-door, and in the middle of the kitchen, among brown jarsfull of currants ready stripped, pounded sugar, lump sugar, scales on the table, pans on the fire, she saw all the Homais, large and small, with aprons which went up to their chins, holding spoons in their hands. Justin was standing there with his head down, and the chemist was shouting:

“Who told you to go and look for it in the capharnaum?”

“What is it? What is the matter?”

“What is the matter?” replied the apothecary. “We are making preserves; they are boiling; but they were going to boil over, and I ask for another pan. Then he, from his slackness, his idleness, goes and takes the key of the capharnaum out of my laboratory, where it hangs on a nail!”

‘This was the name that the apothecary gave to a small room in the attics full of the utensils and stores of his trade. He often spent long hours there alone, labelling, transferring, tying up; and he did not regard it as a simple store-room, but as a veritable sanctuary, from whence there afterwards proceeded the works of his hands,—all kinds of pills, boluses, decoctions, lotions, and potions, wherewithal to spread his celebrity in the neighbourhood. Nobody in the world set foot



there, and he respected it so much that he swept it out himself. In a word, if the shop, open to all comers, was the place where he expanded in his pride, the capharnaum was the spot where Homais egotistically concentrating himself gloried in the practice of his predilections; so the thoughtlessness of Justin appeared to him perfectly monstrous in its irreverence; and redder than his own currants, he repeated:

“Yes, of the capharnaum. The key, which encloses the acids and the caustic alkalis! To have been and fetched a special pan, a covered pan, and which perhaps I shall never be able to use! Everything has its importance in the delicate operations of our art! But in heaven’s name, I say! distinctions must be established; we must not employ for almost domestic purposes that which is destined for pharmaceutical uses! It is as if one were to carve a chicken with a scalpel, as if a magistrate . . .”

“Now don’t vex yourself!” said Madame Homais.

‘And Athaliah, pulling him by his frock-coat, “Papa! Papa!”

“No, let me alone!” went on the apothecary; “let me alone. Death and destruction! One might just as well be a grocer at once, on my word! There! go! Respect nothing! break! shatter! Let the leeches loose! burn the mallows! pickle gurkins in the phials! rend the bandages!”

“You had sent, I think—” said Emma.

“Immediately! Do you know to what you exposed yourself? . . . Did you see nothing in the corner on the left—on the third shelf? Speak—reply—articulate something!”

“I do . . . on’t know,” stammered the young fellow.

“Ah, you don’t know! Well, I know, I do. You saw a bottle, a blue glass bottle, sealed with a yellow seal, which contains a white powder, on which I had myself written: ‘Dangerous’! And do you know what there was inside it? Arsenic! and you go and touch that! Take a pan, which is standing beside it!”

“Beside it!” screamed Madame Homais, clasping her hands. “Arsenic! You might have poisoned us all!”

‘And the children began to give vent to shrieks, as if they had already felt horrible pains in their entrails.

“Yes, or poison a patient!” went on the apothecary. “I

presume you wanted me to go and sit on the criminal's bench in the assize court! To see me dragged to the scaffold! Do you not know the care which I take over my operations, in spite of the fact that my experience is something wonderful. Yes, indeed! I am often terrified at myself, when I reflect upon my own responsibility! For the government persecutes us, and the absurd legislation which controls us is like a veritable sword of Damocles hanging over our heads!"

'Emma no longer thought of asking what was wanted with her, and the druggist went on in panting phrases:

"That is your return for the kindness that is bestowed on you! That is how you reward the fatherly anxiety that I lavish on you! For where would you be? What would you do? Without me! Who supplies you with food, education, clothes, and all the means of one day figuring with honour in the ranks of society! But to arrive at that, you must sweat hard at the oar, and get a tough skin to your hands, as they say. *Fabricando fit faber, age quod agis.*"

'He quoted Latin, so furious was he. He would have quoted Chinese and Esquimaux if he had known those two tongues; for he was at one of those crises in which the whole soul clearly discloses all that it contains, like the ocean which in the storm reveals from the seaweed of its shores to the sand of its abysses.

'And he went on:

"I begin to repent very seriously of having burdened myself with your person. In other days I should certainly have done better to leave you grovelling in the poverty and the dirt in which you were born. You will never be fit for anything but a keeper of horned beasts. You have no aptitude for science, you scarcely know how to gum a label: and you live here in my house like a canon, like a cow in a clover-field, stuffing yourself!"

'But Emma turning to Madame Homais: "I was told to come . . ."

"Ah! mercy on us!" interrupted the good woman with a melancholy countenance, "how could I tell you! . . . There is a misfortune."

'She did not finish. The apothecary thundered: "Empty it! Scrub it! Bring it back! Be quick about it!"

‘And shaking Justin by the collar of his jacket, he caused a book to fall out of his pocket.

‘The boy stooped to pick it up. Homais was too quick for him, and having seized the volume, he gazed at it, his eyes staring, his jaws gaping.

‘“Con—ju—gal Love!” said he, separating the two words very slowly. “Ah! good, very good, very pretty! And plates! . . . Ah, it is too much!”

‘Madame Homais stepped forward.

‘“No, don’t touch it!”

‘The children wanted to see the pictures.

‘“Go out!” said he imperiously.

‘And they went out.

‘First he walked up and down the room with long strides, keeping the volume open between his fingers, rolling his eyes, gasping, swelling, apoplectic. Then he came straight up to his apprentice, and planting himself in front of him with his arms crossed:

‘“Then you have all the vices, miserable little creature! Beware—you are on a downward slope! You did not then reflect that this infamous book might fall into the hands of my children, put the spark into their brains, stain the purity of *Athaliah*, corrupt *Napoleon*! He is already developed like a man. Are you quite sure, at least, that they have not read it? Can you assure me?”

‘“But, sir,” said Emma, “sir, you had to tell me . . .”

‘“It is true, madam, your father-in-law is dead!”

‘In fact, M. Bovary, the father, had died the day before, suddenly, of an apoplectic fit on leaving the table: and from an excess of care for Emma’s sensitiveness, Charles had begged M. Homais to impart this horrible news to her with caution.

‘He had thought over his phrase, he had rounded it, polished it, balanced it; it was a masterpiece of prudence, and transition, of fine turns and delicacy; but wrath had been too strong for rhetoric.

‘Emma, declining any further details, left the shop; for M. Homais had resumed the course of his vituperation. He was however cooling down, and at present was muttering in a paternal tone, while fanning himself with his cap:

“Not that I altogether disapprove of the work! The author was a medical man. There are in it certain scientific aspects which a man is none the worse for knowing, and which, I would venture to say, a man should know. But later—later. Wait at least till you are a man yourself, and your constitution is formed.”

The death of her father-in-law was not of the nature of an overwhelming grief to Emma; but it had a considerable influence upon her future destiny. Charles inherited some real property, and M. Lheureux, who had had pecuniary transactions with both sides of the household, skilfully contrived to suggest to Bovary and his wife that Emma should have a power of attorney to act in her husband's name, he being too much occupied to concern himself with business of that kind.

On the pretext of getting further advice on this subject Emma went to Rouen, where she spent three days with Léon. Presently, by a little adroit manœuvring, she contrived to spend every Thursday in his society, under the pretence of taking music-lessons. She used to leave early in the morning before Charles was awake, and travel in the *Hirondelle*, returning by the same conveyance in the evening. As the omnibus returned up the slope of the Bois Guillaume outside Rouen it used to be followed by a loathsome mendicant, who would thrust his face into the vehicle, a hideous countenance, with awful bleeding eyes; he would sing a country song full of indelicate allusions, and for a few pence ‘go through his comedy,’ squat on the side of the road, throw back his head, showing his horrible purulent orbits, and utter curious howls as he rapidly rubbed his stomach with both hands. Occasionally when he was too importunate, the driver would lash him with his whip.



Léon was at first enraptured with this intrigue, but in due time satiety told on him, and Emma, to maintain her hold, devised endless new methods of exciting his passion; even provoked his jealousy by allusions to a previous lover, a captain of a ship, with whom she had, according to her own statement, cultivated a platonic friendship; and who was entirely fictitious.

Lheureux at the same time skilfully used his knowledge of Emma's irregularities in order to involve her more and more deeply in debt. Becoming every day more impatient of restraint, she signed bills, and renewed them with absolute recklessness, so that she might always be able to find presents for Léon, or to add to the luxury of their meetings. But the day of reckoning came. Lheureux, under the mask of a friend, a banker at Rouen, into whose hands Emma's bills had fallen, pressed for payment, and drove her into further entanglements. At last one evening, on returning from the town, where she had spent the night at a masked ball with Léon, she found a notice served of the sale of her furniture, unless her debt was paid within twenty-four hours.

A desperate interview with Lheureux served to prove that she had reached the end of her tether. The following morning she went off to Rouen to ask for help from Léon; he had no money of his own; he went out and tried to borrow; he returned:

"I have been to three persons . . . without effect!"

"Then they remained seated opposite one another at the two corners of the fireplace, motionless, speechless. Emma shrugged her shoulders, tapping with her feet. He heard her muttering:

"If I were in your place I would find it."

"Where, then?"

"At your office," and she looked at him.

An infernal daring darted from her burning eyes, their lids half-closed in a lascivious, provoking fashion, so that the young

man felt himself quail under the dumb will of this woman suggesting a crime. Fear seized him, and to avoid explanations he hit his forehead, crying :

“Morel will be back to-night ! He will not refuse me, I hope”—(he was one of his friends, the son of a very rich man of business)—“and I will bring it you to-morrow,” added he.

‘Emma did not appear to welcome this hope with as much joy as he had imagined. Did she suspect the lie ? He resumed, reddening :

“However, if you were not to see me by three o’clock do not wait any longer, my pet. I must go ; excuse me—farewell !”’

And thus vanishes ~~M. Léon Dupuis from our story.~~

Madame Bovary, driven desperate, visited in turn M. Guillaumin the notary, Binet, and, as a last resort, Rodolph Boulanger ; then all her romantic dreams ended in putting her in the position of a discarded mistress, ineffectually dunning the lover who threw her over. Maddened by his refusal, she rushed to the chemist’s shop ; she had remembered the blue jar on the shelf in the capharnaum. Fortune proved favourable, the Homais family were in their private apartments ; Justin, who could refuse her nothing, was alone. She demanded the sacred key, rushed up to the attic, seized the bottle, and before the eyes of the affrighted youth crammed a handful of the white powder into her mouth ; then she hurried home, calm in the sensation of an accomplished duty. Before retiring to her room to await the effects of the poison she did not forget to write a note and solemnly deposit it in her desk. It contained the words, ‘Accuse nobody.’

From this moment we feel that Flaubert positively hates the woman whom he has created : he spares her nothing : her whole world crumbles beneath her. The heroines of romances take poison, and die pathetically in an atmosphere

of religion and sentiment; not so Emma. To the last she is attended by the busybody Homais; the worthy but prosaic Abbé Bournisien; and when she has received the priest's absolution, and sinks back to await death with resignation, the song of the beggar of the Bois Guillaume is heard coming down the street.

The scene of the extreme unction was one of those fastened upon by the public prosecutor as an outrage to religion; it is as follows:—

‘The room, when they came in, was full of a solemn sadness. The work-table was covered with a white napkin, and on it there were five or six little balls of cotton-wool in a silver plate beside a great crucifix between two flaming candlesticks.

‘Emma, with her chin on her chest, kept her eyes very wide open, and her poor hands trailed upon the coverlet with that hideous gentle movement of the dying, who seem to be already trying to draw their winding-sheet over them. Pale as a statue, his eyes red as coals, Charles stood opposite her at the foot of the bed, tearless, while the priest, kneeling on one knee, muttered under his breath.

‘She slowly turned her face, and seemed overcome with joy at discovering the violet stole, doubtless experiencing in the midst of a strange peacefulness the lost delights of her first mystical raptures along with the beginnings of a vision of eternal happiness.

‘The priest rose to take the crucifix; then she stretched out her neck like a thirsty man, and, pressing her lips on the body of the Man-God, she bestowed on it with all her dying strength the most fervently loving kiss that she had ever given. Then he recited the *Misereatur* and *Indulgentiam*, dipped his right thumb in the oil and began the unctions; first on the eyes, which had so eagerly coveted all the pomps of the world; then on the nostrils, which delicately scented warm breezes, and amorous odours; then on the mouth, which had opened to tell lies, which had groaned with pride, and shouted in debauchery; then on the hands, which had delighted in tender touching; and lastly on the soles of the feet, once so nimble, when they

ran to the satisfaction of their desires, and which would never walk again.'

These words are all but a literal translation of the Paris ritual for extreme unction; and the outrage on religion consisted in the artistic skill with which the whole scene is led up to and developed. The incongruity between Emma's life and the ease with which she was accepted by the Church in her last moments is brought into startling relief. The implied criticism, not upon the practices of the Roman Catholic Church, but upon the readiness of all men to accept a deathbed repentance, and to put the vilest sinner on a level with those who lead irreproachable lives, wounds a sentiment which, though unavowed, is very strong in most of us. What was resented was not Flaubert's irreverence, but his stern severity. ✓

Even after the death of Madame Bovary her biographer pursues her with unrelenting animosity. The Abbé Bour-nisien and Homais watch in the chamber of death; they quarrel on religious subjects, become reconciled, eat and drink together. The grotesqueness of life still waits upon the tragedy. 3

And then at last we divine that the romantic part has been played, not by the exalted, imaginative, sentimental wife, but by the honest, commonplace, believing, loving husband. He finds letters, first the note from Rodolph in which he announced his determination to leave Emma, as he 'did not wish to make the misfortune of her life': that seemed innocent; then the letters of Léon, other letters of Rodolph. There could now be no room for doubt; but Bovary did not cease to love the woman who had wronged him. One day, at a restaurant, he met Rodolph, who invited him to drink. 'I owe you no grudge,' said Charles. 'It was destiny.' The next day he 11 X



was found dead with a lock of her hair in his hand, in the harbour at the bottom of the garden, where she used to meet her lover.

The reader will be glad to learn that Homais succeeded in getting himself enrolled in the Legion of Honour, and that no medical man was ever able to establish himself permanently in Yonville, so firm was the faith of the countryside in the merits of the surreptitious practice of the great apothecary.

Such is a rapid summary of six years of hard work. Page after page the story was written and re-written, submitted to the criticism of Louis Bouilhet, and then very often written over again. The artistic method is perfect. There is absolutely no padding; there are no reflections, no moralisings, very few descriptions of scenery, only such as are absolutely necessary to the comprehension of the tale; the book is all nerve and muscle. To Ducamp and others there was much that appeared superfluous, not required by the story; they did not see that the story is told as an episode in French provincial life in the nineteenth century, and that the description of Binet with his turning-lathe and fire-brigade is as necessary to the picture as the boots of Bovary. 'A fact is only important in its relation to other facts' was the maxim of Flaubert; and from that he deduced that the environment of the chief personages in his romance was as important as the actions of those personages. Throughout the book there is further a silent reference to a sentence to be passed upon the actors different from the verdict, which they would find for themselves. Homais considered himself a very worthy representative of the most enlightened age of the world's history; we feel that he is a shallow humbug and a charlatan. ) The Abbé Bournisien was a good-hearted fellow, but he wished also to be a wit and a Christian apolo-

gist ; in these capacities he is contemptible. The only person in the book whom we like is the one who makes no claims—poor *Bovary*, who simply loves ; for love, even misplaced love, is the sanctification of life. As for the two paramours, *Boulanger* and *Dupuis*, they are both infinitely despicable ; the adulterer is likely to be a worthless fellow ; and the literature which applauds self-indulgence at the expense of another person's happiness, with the neglect of commonplace domestic duties, is an unwholesome, loathsome, lying literature ; persons who act in accordance with its precepts are hateful.

That is the lesson we learn from the book which was prosecuted as an outrage on morality.

Few persons can read *Madame Bovary* for the first time without a strong sense of discomfort, and the pain caused by the first impression destroys the critical faculty. For many people it is enough to say that a book is painful to condemn it at once as a work of fiction ; the province of fiction is believed to be to amuse, to please, not to hurt. For the sensation of horror caused by a penny dreadful is not an unpleasant sensation, and to read of the thrilling adventures of others is not disagreeable. But a book which gives you a moral jolt, which practically says, 'This and this is the secret desire of your heart, on this you pride yourself,' such a book, with its eternal 'These be your gods, O Israel !' is an outrage upon respectability ; and respectable persons say, 'Such books should be forbidden by law.' It is, however, impossible to legislate upon the province of particular forms of literature ; all we can profitably do is to recognise from time to time the forms in which the thought of the age is finding expression. There can be no manner of doubt that what the dramatic form was to the age of Pericles and of Elizabeth, the prose romance is to the nineteenth century.

The few men who are capable of receiving the impression of the age, of understanding, though unconsciously, its complicated forces, and who have further laid upon them the curse of the artist, and are impelled by the necessities of their own being to expound to their fellow-men what they have seen and heard ; these men now choose the prose romance as the artistic form in which their message may best be delivered. To say that deep thinkers have no business to use such a trivial vehicle is idle.

The literary artist is great just in proportion as his works cause reflection apart from mere emotion. The early narratives, such as Defoe's *Cavalier*, Smollett's *Roderick Random*, Le Sage's *Gil Blas*, endeavour to amuse us by stringing together a number of stories around one person, who is the sole connecting link between them all. They are mere collections of anecdotes, the raw material of art. Between them and such works as *Madame Bovary* or *Romola* there is as wide an interval as between the dithyrambic songs of the Greek rustics and the *Ædipus Rex*. We have passed from the stage of stories strung together, first to the enlarged anecdote with its complex plot, such as *The Woman in White*, and have arrived at the carefully constructed prose poem, which is philosophy and moral science in a concrete form. The possible reactions of a number of human beings upon one another, the necessary developments of certain tendencies in one human being, are reasoned out and placed before us ; and the whole of a romance is as coherent and harmonious as a statue or a painting : you cannot remove a part without disfiguring the whole or rendering it unintelligible. Thus the novel, from being the resource of idle moments, the dissipation of indolent minds, a thing to be preached against, and put away on Sundays, has become the chosen instrument of the gravest thinkers of our age, of our

most earnest preachers. Those who object to the works of George Eliot because they are so disagreeable, to *Madame Bovary* because it is so cruel, and declare that such things ought not to be written, are simply stoning the prophets in order to be rid of them and their home-truths.



## CHAPTER XIII

### THE MAKING OF 'MADAME BOVARY'—THE PROSECUTION

LOUIS BOUILHET was at this time residing in Paris, and from the correspondence addressed to him we get some idea of the sort of pains which Flaubert considered that he ought as a conscientious artist to bestow on his work.

'I have just spent a good week, alone like a hermit, and as calm as a god. I abandoned myself to a frenzy of literature; I got up at midday, I went to bed at four in the morning. I dined with Dakno (his dog); I smoked fifteen pipes in the day; I have written *eight pages*.

'I shall contrive that Homais raves about "cheminots" (a kind of turban-shaped cake made at Rouen). This will be one of the secret motives of his journey to Rouen, and further his solitary human weakness. He shall give himself a feast of them in a friend's house in the Rue St. Gervais. Don't be afraid! They shall be from the Rue Massacre, and they shall be baked in a stove, whose door will be opened with a stick.'

The 'cheminots' duly appear in *Madame Bovary*, and Homais takes a bagful of them home to his wife, but the projected details were mostly suppressed. Flaubert's sense of humour was, as we have seen, apt to run away with him, and Louis Bouilhet sternly repressed its extravagances. The cap in which Charles Bovary first appeared at school was allowed by this severe critic to remain, but a toy, which Flaubert had seen somewhere and been amused by as something abnormally ugly, was rudely withdrawn from the hands

of the children of Homais, in which it had been placed by the author.

‘*Bovary* goes on pianissimo. Be sure and tell me what kind of monstrosity to post on the slope of the Bois-Guillaume. Ought my man to have an eruption on his face, red eyes, a hump, a nose wanting? Should he be an idiot, or a bandy? I am very much puzzled. Devil take father Hugo with his cripples sitting in bowls like snails in the rain! It is most annoying.

‘I am going on very slowly. I give myself an accursed lot of trouble. I have just suppressed phrases at the end of five or six pages, which have cost me the work of entire days. It is impossible for me to see the effect of any one of them before it is finished, re-finished, polished. It is an insane way of working, but what can I do? I have a conviction that the things best in themselves are those that I cut out. One only succeeds in producing an effect by the negation of exuberance; and exuberance is precisely what charms me.

‘Do you know that my mother about six weeks ago said a splendid thing to me (a thing to make the Muse hang herself for jealousy at not having invented it). Here it is: “The mania for phrases has dried up your heart.”

‘Try, my good fellow, and send me by next Sunday, or sooner if you can, the following morsels of medical information. They are going up the slopes, Homais is looking at the blind man with the bleeding eyes (you know the mask) and he makes him a speech; he uses scientific words, thinks that he can cure him, and gives him his address. It is, of course, necessary that Homais should make a mistake, for the poor beast is incurable. If you have not enough in your medicine-bag to supply me with the material for five or six sturdy lines, draw from Follin and send it me. I hope that in a month Mistress Bovary will have the arsenic in her stomach. Shall I bring her to you buried? I doubt it.’

‘I. You are an excellent beast to have replied to me so quickly. The idea of “following a regular diet” is excellent, and I accept it with enthusiasm; as to an operation, that is impossible because of the club-foot, and besides, as it is Homais

himself who wishes to undertake the cure, all surgery must be excluded.

'II. I should like some scientific words designating the different parts of the damaged eye (or eyelids). The whole is damaged, and is a mere squash, in which nothing can be distinguished. None the less Homais employs fine words and distinguishes something to dazzle the gallery.

'III. Lastly, he must speak of some pomade (of his own invention?) good for scrofulous affections, and which he intends to use upon the mendicant. I make him invite the beggar to come to visit him at Yonville in order to have my rascal in at Emma's death! There we are, old fellow. Think a little over all this, and send me something for Sunday.

'I am working moderately, and without gusto, or rather with disgust. I am really tired of this work; it is a regular "impot" to me now.

'We shall probably have much to correct: I have five dialogues in succession, and all say the same thing.'

'1st June 1856.

'Yesterday at last I sent Ducamp the manuscript of *Madame Bovary*, relieved of about thirty pages, without reckoning several lines cut out here and there. I have suppressed three great morsels of Homais, an entire landscape, the conversations of the middle-class folk at the ball, an article by Homais, etc. etc. You may see, old fellow, that I have been heroic. Has the book gained by it? It is at any rate certain that the whole has now more movement.'

In spite of the removal of so much, the editors of the *Revue de Paris* were not satisfied; they found the *Bovary* still too exuberant, and sent back the manuscript yet further reduced. Flaubert kept the copy thus mutilated, and it was found among his papers after his death. To some extent he proved amenable to their criticism, as his reply to Laurence Pichat, Ducamp's co-editor, indicates:—

'Dear Friend,—I have just received the *Bovary*, and first of all I feel the necessity of thanking you for it (if I am coarse, I

am not ungrateful) ; you have rendered me a service in accepting the book, such as it is, and I will not forget it.

‘Admit that you thought me, and that you still think me (more than ever perhaps), violently ridiculous! Some day I shall be delighted to admit that you were right ; I promise you that then I will make you the humblest apologies. But you must understand, dear friend, that before all things I wanted to try an experiment, provided the apprenticeship were not too rough.

‘Do you really believe that this mean reality, whose reproduction disgusts you, does not make my gorge rise as much as yours? If you knew me better, you would know that I hold the everyday life in detestation. Personally I have always kept myself as far away from it as I could. But æsthetically I wanted this time, and only this time, to exhaust it thoroughly. So I took the thing in an heroic fashion, I mean a minute one, accepting everything, saying everything, depicting everything—an ambitious statement !

‘I explain myself badly, but sufficiently well for you to understand the real meaning of my opposition to your criticism, judicious as it was. You were by way of writing me a different book.

‘You were hitting at the innermost poetry from which the type upon which it was conceived followed (as a philosopher would say). Lastly, I believed myself to be wanting in what I owed to myself and to you if I performed an act not of conviction but of deference.

‘Art claims for herself neither complaisance nor politeness, nothing but faith—faith always, and liberty. And on that point I cordially shake hands with you. Under the barren tree with the ever-green leaves, entirely yours.’

The spirit in which Flaubert met the action which the Government brought against the author of *Madame Bovary* is well illustrated by the following letter to Madame Maurice Schlesinger (an old friend of the Trouville days), written on January the 14th, 1857, when the prosecution was still only pending :—

‘How I have been touched, dear lady, by your kind letter !



The questions you ask me about the author and the book have come straight to the right address, don't doubt that. Here then is the whole story. The *Revue de Paris*, in which I published my novel, had already been twice warned, as being a periodical hostile to the Government. Then it was thought very clever to suppress it at one blow, as guilty of immorality and irreligion; in the end passages were picked out at random from my book, both licentious and impious; I had to appear before a magistrate, and the action has begun. But I have made a vigorous stir among my friends, who have bustled about a bit for me among the guardian angels of the capital. In short, I am assured that all is stopped, though I have as yet no official answer. I do not doubt of my success; the whole thing was really too stupid. I intend, therefore, to publish my novel in a volume. You will receive it in about six weeks, I think, and I will mark for your amusement the incriminated passages. One of them, a description of extreme unction, is only a page of the Paris ritual put into French—but the good folk who watch over the maintenance of religion are not strong in catechism.

‘However that may be, I should have been condemned—yes, condemned—to one year's imprisonment, without counting a fine of a thousand francs. Further, each fresh volume from your friend would have been cruelly watched, and cleansed by our respected police, and a fresh offence would have taken me again “to the damp straw of the dungeons” for five years: in a word, it would have been impossible for me to print a line. So, then, I have learned (1) that it is very disagreeable to be mixed up in a political question; (2) that social hypocrisy is a serious matter. But this time it has been so stupid that it has been ashamed of itself, given up its prey, and withdrawn into its den.

‘As to the book itself, which is moral, super-moral, and to which the Monthyon prize would be given—an honour which I do not covet—if its ways of proceeding were less free, it has obtained all the success that a novel published in a periodical can obtain.’

Flaubert was mistaken. The Government did not abandon

the prosecution, and on the 23rd of January he writes to his old friend Jules Cloquet :—

‘I beg to inform you that to-morrow, the twenty-fourth of January, I honour the criminals’ bench with my presence, sixth chamber of the Executive police, at ten o’clock in the morning. Ladies are admitted ; costume must be decent and in good style.

‘I do not count on any justice at all. I shall be condemned, and have to pay the highest possible fine perhaps ; a pleasant reward for my toils ; noble encouragement given to literature. . . . But one thing consoles me for these stupidities : it is that I have found so much sympathy with myself and my book. I count yours in the first rank, my dear friend. The approval of certain minds is more flattering than the prosecutions of the police are dishonouring. Now, I defy the whole French magistracy, with its policemen, and the whole Committee of Public Safety, including its spies, to write a novel which will please you as much as mine. These are the proud thoughts which I propose to cherish in my dungeon.’

The result of the action has been already mentioned. Though the Government saw in *Madame Bovary* a danger to morality, others were of a different opinion ; while the case was still undecided, Flaubert received a letter from a lady unknown to him, strongly praising and thanking him for his work. This letter was the first of a correspondence which continued more or less intermittently for fifteen years. It will be more convenient and instructive to deal with it separately.

## CHAPTER XIV

### ‘SALAMMBÔ.’

THE scandal attaching to *Madame Bovary*, and its subsequent success, caused its author to become one of the lions of Paris. From this time the circle of his acquaintance was largely increased, and we meet with the names of well-known men and women in his correspondence. He did not, however, give himself up to the pleasures of popularity; no sooner was the *Bovary* off his hands than he began the heavy course of reading necessary, according to his ideas, to the production of *Salammbô*.

Maxime Ducamp is of opinion that the work by which Flaubert stands or falls is *Salammbô*, that in that he is more himself than in any other of his books. In other words, if *Salammbô* is a great work, Flaubert is a great writer, and *vice versâ*.

*Salammbô* was published at the end of 1862, and represents six years' work. The strength and defects of this work can most easily be gathered from Flaubert's reply to a criticism written by M. Frœhner, editor of the *Revue Contemporaine*. To understand this, however, a slight preliminary outline of the story is necessary.

*Salammbô* is a narrative of the war waged on Carthage by her Mercenaries after the first Punic War. The struggle lasted a little over two years, and was brought to an end by Hamilcar Barca, the father of the great Hannibal, who enticed the Mercenaries into a defile and exterminated them.

In the war itself there were no striking episodes, and of the personalities of the chief actors very little is known. The moving spirits in the attack upon Carthage were Spendius, a quick-witted Greek, who had been a slave, and Matho, a Libyan soldier. Inside Carthage the work of defence was hampered at the outset by jealousies between the party of Barca, favoured by the populace, and the oligarchy of Carthage. Flaubert does his best to reconstruct ancient Carthage, materially and morally, to show us the picture of a people entirely given up to the acquisition of wealth, unheroic, devoid of chivalry, but capable of obstinate and ferocious resistance to an enemy when in extremity. He depicts them insensible to human suffering, hating and despising with Hebrew exclusiveness all alien races. The Mercenaries, on the other hand, are elaborately portrayed with the reckless habits of soldiers of fortune, pugnacious and careless of life rather than cruel; brave but undisciplined.

To connect the movement inside the town and outside Flaubert invented Salammbô, the daughter of Hamilcar, with whom Matho, the leader of the Mercenaries, is in love, having seen her on the occasion of a feast given to the soldiers in Hamilcar's garden. It is the furious, insane, consuming passion for Salammbô which keeps Matho ranging around the walls of Carthage.

Salammbô had been brought up by Schahabarim, the high priest of Tanit, the Phœnician Venus. She had no knowledge of the vulgar and impure forms of worship connected with this deity; her time was spent in prayer and fasting, in vigils, in ceremonial observances; none of these availed to still the strange disquiet of her heart; she yearned for an initiation into further mysteries, whose nature she could not divine.

Within the inmost cell of the labyrinthine temple of



Tanit was suspended the zäimph, the sacred veil of the goddess. On the possession of this veil hung the destinies of Carthage; so long as it remained draped over a formless stone, the most holy embodiment of the Rabbetna, the goddess watched over Carthage; were it once lost, she would follow the fortunes of the man or people into whose possession it passed. Salammbô had never seen the zäimph, indeed the sight of the mystic web was believed to bring death upon those who beheld it with eyes unpurified, but it and its potency largely filled her imagination. She often implored Schahabarim to allow her to make herself fit to behold it by the necessary prayers and ceremonies. He evaded the subject, or rebuked her presumptuous curiosity.

Spendius, who had been a slave in the palace of Hamilcar, was well aware of the existence of the zäimph, and of the superstition connected with it. As soon as the Mercenaries declared war upon Carthage, he formed the idea of stealing it. From the beginning he had attached himself to Matho, knew of his love-sickness, had divined in him the right man to lead the Mercenary forces, and aware of his passionate longing to enter Carthage again, determined to make use of him in the enterprise of carrying off the zäimph.

By means of the great aqueduct Spendius and Matho entered Carthage in the night: they penetrated the innermost recesses of the temple of Tanit, lifted the zäimph from its hooks. Matho wrapped it over his head and shoulders, and then refused to leave Carthage till he had seen Salammbô. Guided by Spendius, he made his way to the sleeping-chamber of Hamilcar's daughter; she awoke to see a glorious man, robed in the holy garment of the goddess, standing before her. At first dazzled, she soon recovered herself sufficiently to curse the enemy of her race, the spoiler of its divinity, and then alarmed her household. Spendius escaped un-

noticed. Matho walked out through the waking town amid the howls of the inhabitants, protected by the sanctity of the stolen veil.

Flaubert then relates in elaborate detail the history of the Mercenary war. His inveterate satirical humour reveals itself in his description of the warlike preparations made by Hanno, the incompetent colleague, but rival, of Hamilcar; while the drill and military discipline of the citizens of Carthage recall the *Garde Nationale*. The Mercenaries, owing to a clever device of Spendius, defeated Hanno and his elephants. Despair seized the rulers of Carthage. At this moment Hamilcar, long absent on his duties as suffete of the sea, returned. The Mercenary forces had always been closely associated with him; he had commanded them in various wars; he was suspected of wishing to make himself absolute monarch of Carthage by their aid. For this reason Hanno and the oligarchical party, while the Mercenaries were still in the city, had sent them to feast in the gardens of Hamilcar's palace; they counted upon the mischief which these rough guests would work to produce a breach between them and their general. Nor were they disappointed. Hamilcar returned to find his trees burned, his slaves freed or mutilated, his family elephants slain or hideously disfigured; worse than all, to hear a horrible insinuation of Matho's nocturnal visit to Salammbô. The revengeful man—the same man who afterwards caused his six-year-old son to swear to punish the Romans—became possessed with the fierce longing to destroy those who had thus outraged his home, wounded his family pride. He prosecuted the war with vigour, but not at first with striking success. Carthage felt the loss of the zäimph; execrated Salammbô. Schahabarim persuaded her that it was her duty to recover the holy veil. As soon as she formed this resolution her family serpent,

which had hitherto been ailing, began to recover health. Clearly the gods of her family and country smiled on her enterprise.

The forces of Carthage and the Mercenaries were at this time encamped close to one another in the mountains near Hippo Zaryta. Conveyed by a slave provided by Schahabarim, Salammbô having first ceremonially enlaced herself in the folds of the family serpent, made her way to the tent of Matho; she demanded the sacred veil. In the course of the night a fire broke out in the camp, and in the confusion that followed Salammbô made her way out of the tent of the Mercenary chieftain with the zäimph, and arrived at her father's headquarters, in the sight of the whole army, just as the sun rose. That day the Carthaginians achieved a complete victory; and Salammbô was betrothed to a Numidian chieftain Narrhavas, whose desertion from the Mercenaries had occurred at this opportune moment.

The victory of Hamilcar was not, however, complete. The Mercenaries were still strong enough to lay siege to Carthage—to cut the aqueduct.

Flaubert describes the sufferings of the besieged city in detail, the climax being an awful scene, in which the despairing citizens offer their children to Moloch. This hideous sacrifice was followed by rain.

Soon after Hamilcar appeared before the city walls, and by the semblance of flight contrived to draw away the army of the Mercenaries several days' march into the defile of the Hatchet, where he had prepared a trap for them. They were surrounded, and most of them slain. Among the few prisoners reserved from the massacre to grace the triumph of Hamilcar in Carthage was Matho. That the wrath of the people might be satisfied, and each have a share in the vengeance, he was condemned to run the gauntlet through

the streets, and his bleeding form, scarcely recognisable as human, threw the last living glance of its dying eyes up to the tribunal in front of the temple of Khamon, where Salammbô was enthroned alongside of Narrhavas. A few moments afterwards Salammbô herself fell dead in the arms of her betrothed.

‘Thus perished Hamilcar’s daughter for having touched the veil of Tanit.’

Flaubert’s own estimate of the defects of his own book is as follows (he is replying to a criticism of Sainte-Beuve):—

‘1. The pedestal is too large for the statue. Now, as one never sins by excess, but always by defect, there should have been a hundred pages more given to Salammbô alone.

‘2. Some transitions are wanting. They existed; I cut them out, or over-shortened them, in the dread of being wearisome.

‘3. In Chapter vi. all that refers to Gisco is of the same strain as the second part of Chapter ii. (Hanno). It is the same situation, and there is no advance in the effect.

‘4. All that reaches from the battle of the Macar to the serpent, and all Chapter xiii. to the numbering of the Mercenaries, sinks—disappears in the memory. These are passages on the background, dry, transitional, that I, unfortunately, could not avoid, and which render the book heavy in spite of the efforts of agility that I was able to make. These are the passages which have cost me most, which I love the least, and for which I am the most grateful to myself.

‘5. The aqueduct. Confession—My secret opinion is that there was no aqueduct at Carthage, in spite of the existing ruins of the aqueduct. So I have taken care to anticipate all objections by a hypocritical phrase for the benefit of the antiquaries. I put my feet in the trough clumsily by mentioning that it was a Roman invention, new at that time, and that the present aqueduct was reconstructed upon the old one. The recollection of Belisarius cutting the Roman aqueduct of Carthage haunted me, and then it was such a splendid way of introducing Spendius and Matho! Never mind, my aqueduct is a weak spot! *Confiteor*.



‘6. Another, and last bit of cheating—Hanno. Through love of clearness I have falsified history in the matter of his death. He certainly was, it is true, crucified by the Mercenaries, but in Sardinia. The general crucified at Tunis opposite Spendius was called Hannibal. But what confusion that would have caused to the reader !

‘Such is, dear master, the worst there is in my book, according to my own opinion. I do not tell you what good I find in it. But be assured that I have not made an imaginary Carthage. Documentary statements about Carthage exist, and they are not all in Movers. It is necessary to go and look for them a little farther off. Thus Ammianus Marcellinus has supplied me with the exact shape of a gate ; the poem of Corippus (the *Johannid*) with many details on the African populations, etc. etc.’

Flaubert’s admissions as to his own failures are interesting, but they do not hit the point. *Salammbô* is neither romance nor history ; it is too minute for the former, and not diffuse enough for the latter. It is none the less such a work as only a giant could achieve, and it is a gigantic failure.

The most convincing proof of the justice of the above verdict is afforded by Flaubert’s defence of his work against the criticisms of M. Frœhner, which at the same time reveals his strength. We can understand the enormous respect felt by his contemporaries for a controversialist of such sound and extensive erudition, who could hit out so neatly and with such force ; we further learn by this striking illustration what he meant by conscience in art, and how inartistic might be his methods :—

‘Sir,—I have just read your article on *Salammbô* which appeared in the *Revue Contemporaine* of the 31st of December 1862. In spite of the habit I have formed of never replying to any criticism, I cannot accept yours. It is full of propriety, and of things extremely flattering to me ; but as it throws a doubt upon the honesty of my researches, you will allow me, if you please, here to take exception to several of your assertions.

‘I will first ask you, sir, why you so persistently associate

me with the Campana Collection, affirming that it has been my permanent resource and inspiration. Now, I had finished *Salammbô* in the month of March, six weeks before the opening of that Museum. There is a mistake to begin with. We shall find some more serious.

‘I make, sir, no pretence to archæology. I have published my book as a romance, without preface, without notes, and I am surprised that a man like you, famous by works of such importance, should waste his leisure on such light literature! I do however know enough about it, sir, to venture to say, that you are completely wrong from one end to the other of your work, the whole length of your eighteen pages, in each paragraph, and in every line.

‘You find fault with me “for not having consulted Falbe or Dureau de la Malle, by whom I might have profited.” A thousand pardons! I have read them, more often than you perhaps, and on the very ruins of Carthage. That you should know “nothing satisfactory about the form of the place or its principal quarters” is very possible; but others, better informed, do not share your scepticism. If we do not know where the suburb Aclas was, the place called Fuscianus, the exact position of the principal gates of which we have the names, etc., we do know well enough the aspect of the town, the architectural character of its walls, the Taenia, the Mole, and the Cothon. We know that the houses were plastered with bitumen, and the streets paved; we have an idea of the Ancô described in my fifteenth chapter; we have heard tell of Malqua, of Byrsa, of Megara, of the Mappalia, and the Catacombs, and of the temple of Eschmoun, placed on the Acropolis, and that of Tanit, a little to the right, when standing with one’s back to the sea. All that is to be found (not to speak of Pliny, of Appian, and Procopius) in that same Dureau de la Malle, whom you accuse me of not knowing. It is then to be regretted, sir, that you did not “enter into tiresome details to show” that I had no idea of the position and arrangement of ancient Carthage, “still less than Dureau de la Malle,” you add. But what must one believe? to whom trust one’s self, since you have not up to the present been so obliging as to reveal your own system of Carthaginian topography?

‘I do not possess, it is true, any text to prove to you that there existed a street of the Tanners, of the Perfumers, of the Dyers. It is in any case a probable hypothesis, you must admit. But I did not invent Kinisdo and Cynasyn, words, say you, whose structure is foreign to the spirit of the Semitic languages. Not so foreign, however, since they are all in Gesenius—almost all my Punic names, disfigured according to you, being taken from Gesenius (*Scripturæ linguæque Phœniciaë*, etc.) or from Falbe, whom I have consulted, I assure you.

‘An Orientalist of your erudition, sir, should have had a little more indulgence for the Numidian name Naravasse, which I write Nar’Havas, from Nar-el-haouah, “fire of breath.” You might have divined, that the two *m*’s of Salammbô were put expressly to cause it to be pronounced Salam, and not Salan, and you might have charitably imagined that *Egates* instead of *Ægates* was a printer’s error, corrected for the matter of that in the second edition of my book, anterior by a fortnight to your admonitions. It is the same with “*Scissites*” for “*Syssites*” and the word Kabiri (which had been printed without a K—horrors! even in the most serious works, such as the *Religions of Ancient Greece* by Maury). As for Schalischim, if I have not written (as I ought to have done) Rosch-eisch-Schalischim, it was to shorten an already over-repellent name, further, not imagining that I should be examined by a philologist . . . (a criticism on two French words used by Frœhner).

‘Still one thing, however! Why have you underlined the *and* in this phrase, somewhat mutilated, of my 156th page: “Buy me Cappadocians *and* Asiatics.” Is it to shine by trying to make the dunces believe that I do not distinguish between Cappadocia and Asia Minor? But I know it, sir, I have seen it, I have taken walks in it!

‘You have read me so carelessly that you nearly always quote me wrong. I have nowhere said that the priests formed a separate caste; nor, page 109, that the Libyan soldiers were possessed with the desire to drink iron, “but that the Mercenaries threatened the Carthaginians with making them drink iron”; nor, page 108, that the guards of the legion “wore in the middle of their foreheads a silver horn to make them resemble rhinoceroses,” but “their big horses had,” etc.; nor, page

29, that the peasants one day amused themselves with crucifying two hundred lions. The same remark applies to those unfortunate Syssities, a term which I have used, according to you, "doubtless not knowing that this word signified private corporations." "Doubtless" is kind. But doubtless I knew what these corporations were, and the etymology of the word, since I translated it into French the first time it appears in my book, page 7: Syssities, companies (of merchants) who used to eat together. You have in the same way misquoted a passage of Plautus, for it is not demonstrated in the *Pænulus* that "the Carthaginians knew all languages," which would have been a strange privilege to be enjoyed by a whole nation; there is simply in the prologue, i. 112, "Is omnes linguas scit," which must be translated: "*He* knows all languages"—the Carthaginian in question, and not all the Carthaginians.

'It is not true to say that "Hanno was not crucified in the Mercenary war, seeing that he commanded armies long afterwards," for you will find, sir, in Polybius, that the rebels seized his person, and fastened him to a cross (in Sardinia, it is true, but at the same period), Book i. chap. xvii. It is not then for this personage to complain of M. Flaubert, but rather Polybius who would have to complain of M. Frœhner.

'As for the sacrifices of children, it is so far from impossible that they were burned alive in the siege of Hamilcar, that they were still burned in the time of Julius Cæsar and of Tiberius, if one may trust Cicero (*pro Balba*) and Strabo (Book III). However, "The statue of Moloch does not resemble the infernal machine described in Salammô. This figure, composed of seven compartments placed one on the top of the other, to hold the victims, belongs to the religion of Gaul. M. Flaubert has no pretext in analogy to justify his audacious transference."

'No—I have no pretext, that is true! But I have a text, to wit the text, the very description, of Diodorus to which you refer, and which is no other than mine, as you will be able to convince yourself by condescending to read, or read again Book iv. chap. 20 of Diodorus, to which you will add the Chaldaic paraphrase of Paul Fage, of which you do not speak, and which is quoted by Selten, *De diis Syriis* pp. 164-170, with Eusebius *Introduction to the Gospels*, Book i.



‘How does it come to pass, too, that history says nothing of the miraculous veil, since you yourself say “that it used to be shown in the temple of Venice, but much later, and first at the period of the Roman Emperors”! Now I find in Athenæus xii. 58 the very detailed description of this veil, although history says nothing about it. It was bought from Dionysius the Elder for a hundred and twenty talents, taken to Rome by Scipio Emilianus, carried back to Carthage by Caius Gracchus, returned to Rome under Heliogabalus, then was sold to Carthage. All that moreover is to be found in Dureau de la Malle, by whom I have profited, certainly.

‘Three lines lower down you affirm with the same . . . candour that “most of the other gods invoked in *Salammbô* are pure inventions,” and you add: “Who has ever heard speak of an Aptouchus?” Who? L’Avez-ac (Cyrenaica) in connection with a temple in the neighbourhood of Cyrene; “of a Schaoûl?” but it is a name, which I give to a slave (see my ninety-first page); “or of a Matismann?” He is mentioned as a god by Corippus. (See *Johanneid* and *Mém. de l’Académie des Inscript.*, tome xii. p. 181.) “Who does not know that Micipsa was not a divinity but a man?” Now that is just what I say, sir, and very clearly, in that same ninety-first page, when *Salammbô* calls her slaves: “Here, Kroum, Euva, Micipsa, Schaoûl.”

‘You accuse me of taking Ashtaroth and Astarte for two distinct divinities. But at the beginning, page 48, when *Salammbô* invokes Tanit, she invokes her by all her names at once: “Anàitis, Astarte, Derceto, Ashtaroth, Tiratha.” And I have even taken care to say a little further on, page 52, that she repeated “all these names without their having any distinct signification for her.” Can you be like *Salammbô*! I am tempted to believe it, since you make Tanit the goddess of war, and not of love, of the female element, moist, fertile, in spite of Tertullian, and of this very name Tiratha, the explanation of which, somewhat indecent, but plain enough, you will find in *Movers, Phenix*, Book I. p. 574.

‘You are also astounded at the apes consecrated to the moon, and the horses consecrated to the sun. “These details,” you are sure, “are not found in any ancient author, nor in any

authentic record." Now as for the apes I will permit myself, sir, to remind you that in Egypt baboons were consecrated to the moon, as they are still to be seen upon the walls of the temples, and that the Egyptian cults had penetrated into Libya and into the oases. As for the horses I do not say that there were any consecrated to Æsculapius, but to Eschmoun, assimilated with Æsculapius, Iolaüs, Apollo, the Sun. Now I see the horses consecrated to the Sun in Pausanias (Bk. i. cap. i.) and in the Bible (2 Kings xxxii.). But perhaps you will deny that the temples of Egypt are authentic remains, and the Bible and Pausanias ancient authors.

'In connection with the Bible, sir, I will further take the great liberty of calling your attention to the second volume of Cahen's translation, p. 186, where you will read this: "they wore on their necks, hanging by a gold chain, a little figure in precious stones, which they used to call Truth. The debates opened, when the president placed the image of Truth in front of him." This is a quotation from Diodorus. Here is another from Ælian: "The eldest among them was their chief and their judge; he used to wear round his neck an image in sapphire. This image was called Truth." It is in this way, sir, that "that Truth is a pretty invention of the author's."

'But everything astonishes you: the molobathrum, which is equally well written (with all respect to you) malobathrum or malabathrum, the gold dust, which is collected to-day, as formerly, on the shore of Carthage, the ears of the elephants painted blue, the men who daub themselves with vermilion and eat vermin and apes, the Lydians in women's dresses, the lynx carbuncles, the mandrakes, which are in Hippocrates, the chainlet on the ankles, which is in the Song of Songs (Cahen, t. xvi. 37), and the irrigation with silphium, the beards in bags, the crucified lions, etc. . . . everything!

'Well—sir, No. I did not "borrow all these details from the negroes of Senegambia." I refer you for the elephants to Armandi's work, p. 256, and to the authorities that he indicates, such as Florus, Diodorus, Ammianus Marcellinus, and other negroes from Senegambia.

'As for the nomads who eat apes, chew lice, and daub themselves with vermilion, as you might be asked "from what

source the author has derived this precious information," and as "you would be," according to your own admission, "very much embarrassed to say," I will give you, with all humility, some indications, which may facilitate your researches.

"The Mascii . . . paint their bodies with vermilion. The Gysarites paint themselves all over with vermilion, and eat apes. Their wives (those of the Adrymachydes), if they are bitten by a louse, take it, and bite it, etc." You will see all that in the fourth book of Herodotus, in chapters 194, 191, and 168. I have no difficulty in telling you.

'The same Herodotus informed me, in the description of the army of Xerxes, that the Lydians had women's dresses; further, Athenæus, in his chapter on the Etruscans, and their resemblance to the Lydians, says that they wore the dresses of women; lastly, the Lydian Bacchus is always represented in a female costume. Is this sufficient about the Lydians and their garments?

The beards covered in bags in sign of mourning are in Cahen (Ezekiel xxiv. 17) and on the chins of Egyptian colossi, those of Abou-Simbal among others; the carbuncles formed by the urine of the lynx, in Theophrastus, book on Gems, and in Pliny Bk. viii. chap. lviii. And as for what concerns the crucified lions (whose number you bring up to two hundred, in order, doubtless, to make me a present of an absurdity, which is not mine), I beg you to read in the same book of Pliny the eighteenth chapter, where you will learn that Scipio Æmilianus and Polybius, walking together in the country near Carthage, saw some of them tortured in this fashion: "*Quia cæteri metu pœnæ similis absterrentur eadem noxia.*" Are these, sir, the passages taken indiscriminately from the *Univers pittoresque*, and "which the higher criticism has successfully used against me"? Of what high criticism do you speak? Of your own?

'You divert yourself prodigiously with the pomegranates watered with silphium. But this detail, sir, is not mine. It is in Pliny, Bk. xxii. chap. xlvii. I am much concerned for your joke about "the hellebore which ought to be cultivated at Charenton"; but as you say yourself, "The most penetrating mind cannot supply the want of sound knowledge."

'You have gone completely wrong in affirming that "among

the precious stones of Hamilcar's treasure more than one belongs to the Christian legends and superstitions." No! sir. They are all from Pliny and Theophrastus.

'The emerald pillars at the entrance of the temple, which make you laugh, for you are gay, are mentioned by Philostratus (*Apollonii Vita*) and by Theophrastus (*Treatise on Gems*). Heeren (v. 11) quotes his phrase: "The greatest Bactrian emerald is at Tyre in the temple of Hercules. . It is a column of some size." Another passage of Theophrastus (Hill's translation): "There was in the temple of Jupiter an obelisk composed of four emeralds."

'In spite of your "sound information," you confuse jade, which is a nephrite of a green brown colour, and which comes from China, with jasper, a variety of quartz which is found in Europe and Sicily.

'If you had chanced to have opened the Dictionary of the French Academy at the word jasper, you would have learned, without going any further, that there were black, red, and white varieties. You should then, sir, have controlled the transports of your indomitable spirit, and not have lightly reproached my master and friend Théophile Gauthier, with having lent a woman (in his *Romance of a Mummy*) green feet, when he gave her white feet. So it is not he, but you, that have made "a ridiculous error." If you had a little less contempt for travelling, you might have seen in the Museum of Turin the very arm of this mummy, brought back from Egypt by M. Passalacqua, and in the position, which Théophile Gauthier describes, that position, which, according to you, is certainly not Egyptian. Without being an engineer either, you might have learned what the sakieh are to supply the houses with water, and you would have been convinced that I have not made an unjustifiable use of black garments in putting them in countries, where they swarm, and where the women of the upper classes never go out except in black veils. But as you prefer written evidence, I recommend to your notice, for all that concerns the clothing of the women, Isaiah iii. 3, the Mischna under *Sabbatho*, Samuel xiii. 18, Clement of Alexandria, part ii. 13, and the dissertations of Abbé Mignot in the *Mémoires de l'Académie des Inscriptions*, xlv. And as for that super-



abundance of ornamentation, which astounds you so much, I had every right to lavish it upon peoples who encrusted precious stones in the floors of their rooms (Cahen, Ezekiel xxviii. 14). But you are not happy in the matter of precious stones.

‘I conclude, sir, with thanking you for the well-bred forms which you have employed, a rare thing nowadays. Among your inaccuracies I have only noticed the grossest, those which touched on special points. As for the vague criticisms, the personal applications, and the literary review of my book, I have not even alluded to them. I have restricted myself the whole time to your own field, that of science; and I repeat to you once again, that I am but moderately sound in that. I neither know Hebrew, nor Arabic, nor German, nor Greek, nor Latin, and I do not pride myself on my knowledge of French. I have often used translations, but sometimes also the originals. I have consulted in my times of doubt the men who pass for being the most competent in France, and if I “have not been better guided,” the reason is that I had not the honour, the advantage of knowing you. Excuse me! if I had taken advice from you should I have “succeeded better”? I doubt it. In any case, I should have lost some signs of goodwill which you bestow on me here and there in your article, and I should have spared you the kind of remorse with which it concludes. But comfort yourself, sir! although you seem terrified at your own force, and you think seriously “you have cut up my book bit by bit,” do not be afraid, calm yourself! For you have not been cruel, but . . . trivial.—I have the honour to be, etc.,

‘GUSTAVE FLAUBERT.’

A romance that needs to be defended in this style is at once condemned as a romance. It may be a very learned work, and a conscientious work, but it cannot be one of those works of deep human interest which arrest the attention even of the unlearned. As the *St. Anthony* is spoiled by the processions of strange monsters, and little known divinities, so *Salammbô* fails to be effective by the very prodigality of the accurate details which are lavished upon the picture; and these details are mostly concerned with the material

surroundings of the characters. Some of the descriptions are not overloaded for the effect intended, such, for instance, as the description of Hamilcar's palace and treasures, of the temples of Tanit and Moloch, of the defeat of Hanno ; but we soon weary of such writing as this :—

‘The Carthaginians were still in the first panic of their arrival, when they perceived, coming straight towards them like monsters, and like buildings, with their masts, their arms, their cords, their articulations, their capitals, and their carapaces, the siege machines, which were sent by the Tyrian towns, sixty carrobalistæ, eighty onagri, thirty scorpions, fifty tolenones, twelve battering-rams, and three gigantic catapults, which hurled pieces of rock weighing fifteen talents. Masses of men pushed them on, hooked on to their bases ; at each step a shudder shook them ; thus they came up to the front of the walls.’

From the antiquarian point of view this is all interesting enough ; but it does not add to our conception of Salammbô or Carthage. In such a work even as Bekker's *Charicles*, which professes to illustrate archæology, these minute descriptions of material appliances are relegated to the notes. There is nothing lyrical in long categories of jewels, coins, plants, arms, perfumes ; nothing artistic in the multiplication of the many-syllabled names of tribes, of whom little is known except that their nasty habits are recorded by Herodotus.

On the other hand, it must be admitted that we are given a very clear picture of one point in which antiquity differs from the nineteenth century, viz., in the indifference to physical suffering, to butchery, to general noisomeness. Flaubert is merciless in this particular ; pools of blood, gobbets of flesh, the circumambient entrails of wounded elephants, Hanno's leprosy, and still more loathsome palliatives of that leprosy, pestiferous stinks, putrefaction, assail us on every opportunity. This multiplication of horrors

amounts to nothing in the end, and eventually affects the reader no more than the gory pictures painted outside a show at a fair; yet for all this Flaubert was provided with chapter and verse. The only fine conception in the book, which is adequately and not redundantly treated, is the love-sickness of Matho; and that is an invention.

Strange irony! Flaubert thought when he wrote this book that he was giving the rein to his imagination, his friends thought he was developing his lyrical tendency; in fact, he was enjoying an orgy of antiquarian erudition.

The historian may read *Salammbo* with profit, the student with interest, but the book remains a monumental scarecrow; a warning as to how a historical romance should not be written.

In connection with the repulsive descriptions in *Salammbo* there arises the question as to whether wounds and gore and evil smells affected Flaubert as they affect the generality of men. Most probably not. We have seen that when quite a child he was in the habit of watching his father at work in the dissecting-room through a window. A surgeon's household is the last place in which squeamishness is encouraged. Flaubert describes during his Breton tour the aspect of a slaughter-house, enthusiastically; at Jerusalem he was fascinated by the place of slaughtering in the street. In measuring his artistic blunder, we must judge him from his own point of view; these things were not horrible or repellent to him; and he did not believe that they could genuinely be so to others.

More than this, Flaubert was a fanatical worshipper of truth; he could not gloss over, conceal. He was of opinion that mankind, as a rule, deceive themselves deliberately; avert their eyes from what is disagreeable, inconsistent with their prejudices. We have seen the scrupulous minuteness

with which he sought authority for every statement which he makes. The result is, however, not a work of art, but a scientific document, whose scientific value is to most readers non-existent, because it appears in the form of a work of fiction.

Here again, by a strange irony, Flaubert is a flagrant sinner against his own rules ; for what has truth to do with those works of art which have no subject ? whose words are a succession of melodious sounds affecting mankind by their beauty, and their beauty only ?

In holding a brief for truth, as he understood it, and in destroying the beauty of his works by descriptions of things which to ordinary men and women are nauseous even more than ugly, he was as much guilty of writing romances with a purpose as Xavier de Maistre or Walter Besant.

Guy de Maupassant has asked whether Carthage really was as Flaubert described it, and decided in the negative—why ? Probably because it is impossible to imagine human beings existing under the conditions that Flaubert describes ; but were they so very much worse than the condition of the Netherlands under Alva ?



## CHAPTER XV

THE 'EDUCATION SENTIMENTALE'—LETTERS TO TWO LADIES—

### RELIGION

IT is often pleasant to turn from Flaubert the author to Flaubert the man. After the publication of *Salammbô* his society was even more sought after than when *Madame Bovary* had startled Paris. He used to spend a few months in the winter in the capital, charming by his expansive good-nature, his apparently inexhaustible animal spirits, astounding by his erudition; everywhere preaching the gospel of art for art's sake. He became a friend of the Princesse Mathilde, and was even invited to Fontainebleau, where, some one having spoken contemptuously of Victor Hugo, he was with difficulty prevented from reciting *Les Châtiments* in the presence of the Empress. He became a friend of the brothers De Goncourt, of Daudet, of Zola, of Turgénieff. He frequented the theatres, studied actors and actresses behind the scenes, in whom he discovered something peculiarly and irresistibly comic. Needless to say that work went on as usual. After finishing *Salammbô* he again picked up *St. Anthony*, and again put it reluctantly aside. Then he worked for a while at a fairy piece of a perfectly novel construction, in which all metaphors were suddenly to be embodied in visible shape on the stage. How this was to be managed is not quite apparent; and as the same difficulty suggested itself to theatrical managers the fairy piece was never performed or published.

At last Flaubert fell back upon another youthful effort, which, like the *St. Antoine*, had been consigned to his portfolios. It was called the *Education Sentimentale*, and the original story was suggested by his own platonic adoration of a married woman whom he had met first at Trouville when he was only a lad of fourteen. From this experience he deduced a theory of disillusionment in the matter of love, of a degradation of the ideal; but men do not only live through their conceptions of love, they also live through their ideal conceptions of every kind; their political faiths, their ambitions, give way to wider knowledge of life and of themselves; they are often deceived at the outset in their very conception of themselves, mistake a love of notoriety for patriotism, taste for idle gossip for political activity; congratulate themselves on their originality when they emit or swallow ready-made phrases. To illustrate these views Flaubert wrote a book, which has little of the original *Education Sentimentale* except the name; he worked at it for six years with the same minute conscientiousness in matters of detail that he had expended upon *Salammbô*. The period selected for the story is that immediately preceding and following the Revolution of '48; and the possible environment of the personages at that epoch was most carefully worked out. If his characters have to go to Fontainebleau, Flaubert must ascertain exactly how they would be able to travel, whether the railway was open as far as Corbeil, and so forth. Details of the fighting in the streets in '48 were gathered from eye-witnesses; the conversations of the period are reproduced in the style of the literature current at the time; even the newspapers, so antipathetic to Flaubert's own tastes, were carefully exploited.

Among his correspondents at this time are two ladies, one of whom, Mademoiselle Leroyer de Chantepie, he never

saw ; she is the lady who wrote to him on the publication of *Madame Bovary* ; the other, Madame Roger des Genettes, who died in January 1891, was the granddaughter of the Girondin Valazé ; her husband and cousin, Charles Roger des Genettes, was descended from one of the eminent military medical men of the first Empire ; she herself lived in contact with the most brilliant figures in Parisian literary society. In this correspondence Flaubert reveals qualities which were not suspected by the male friends of the noisy giant, who used to howl verses in the heat of controversy, and bang the table till the glasses jingled. While the ethical views expressed in these letters are in accordance with the known facts of his life, on the other hand, much of their philosophy is also to be found in the *Saint Antoine* ; thus these letters are to some extent a bridge connecting his private with his artistic life.

TO M<sup>LE</sup> LEROYER DE CHANTEPIE.

‘ PARIS, March 18, ’57.

‘ . . . With such and so sympathetic a reader as you, madam, frankness is a duty ; so I am going to answer your questions. There is no real fact in *Madame Bovary* ; the story is entirely invented ; I have not put into it either my own sentiments or any of my own existence. On the contrary, the illusion (if there is any) comes from the impersonality of the work. It is one of my principles that the author should not describe himself. The artist should be in his work, like God in creation, invisible and all-powerful ; he should be felt everywhere, and seen nowhere. And then art should be raised above personal affections and nervous susceptibilities. It is time to give it the precision of the physical sciences by means of pitiless method. For me the capital difficulty none the less continues to be style, form, the indefinable beauty, which is the result of the conception itself, and which is the splendour of truth, as Plato used to say.’

‘ CROISSET, May 18, ’57.

‘ . . . You ask me how I cured myself of the nervous halluci-

nations from which I formerly suffered? In two ways: (1) by studying them scientifically, that is to say, by trying to understand them; and (2) by force of will. I have often felt insanity coming upon me. There was a whirl of ideas and images in my poor brain, in which my consciousness, my *me*, seemed to founder like a ship beneath a storm. But I clung desperately to my reason. It prevailed over everything, though besieged and beaten upon. At other times I used to try by means of imagination to give myself these horrible sufferings factitiously. I have played with madness and fantasy like Mithridates with the poisons. I was sustained by a mighty pride, and I conquered the mischief by wrestling with it, body to body.

‘There is a sentiment, or rather a habit, in which you seem to me to be wanting, to wit, the *love of contemplation*. Take life, the passions, and yourself, as a subject for intellectual exercise; you revolt against the injustice of the world, its baseness, its tyranny, and all the turpitude and nauseousness of existence. But do you *know* these things thoroughly? Have you studied everything? Are you God? Who tells you that your human judgment is infallible? that your sentiments do not deceive you? How can we, with our limited senses and our finite intelligence, reach an absolute knowledge of the true and the good? Shall we ever grasp the infinite? If one wishes to live, one must renounce the notion of having a clear conception of anything whatever. Humanity is so; our business is not to change it, but to know it.

‘. . . I take an example: you are much concerned about the injustices of this world, about socialism, about politics. Let it be so! Well, first read all those who have had the same ambitions as yourself; search the Utopians and the dry thinkers. And then, before allowing yourself a final opinion, you will have to study a somewhat modern science which is much talked of, but little cultivated; I mean Political Economy. You will be astounded to find yourself change your opinions from day to day as a man changes his shirt. Never mind! There will be no bitterness in your scepticism, for you sit, as it were, at the comedy of Humanity, and History will seem to have passed over the world for you alone.



‘Trivial people, limited people, presumptuous and enthusiastic minds, want to have a conclusion in everything; they seek for the aim of life and the dimensions of infinity. They take a handful of sand in their poor little fists and say to the ocean, “I am going to count the grains on thy shores.” But as the grains slip between their fingers, and the calculation is long, they stamp and cry. Do you know what one should do on the sea-shore? Kneel or walk. Do you walk!’

‘No great genius has concluded, and no great book ends, because humanity itself is always on the march, and does not conclude. There is no conclusion in Homer, nor in Shakespeare, nor in Goethe, nor in the Bible itself. And so the fashionable phrase, “social problem,” is to me extremely revolting. The day on which it is solved will be the last of the planet. Life is an eternal problem, and history too, and everything. Figures are being perpetually added to the addition sum. How many spokes can you count in a revolving wheel? The nineteenth century, in the pride of its emancipation, believes itself to have discovered the sun. For example, it is said that the Reformation was the preparation for the French Revolution. That would be true if everything had been going to stop at that point, but this Revolution is itself the preparation for another condition; and so on, and so on. Our most advanced ideas will seem very ridiculous, and very backward, when we look at them over our shoulders. I bet that in as little as fifty years the phrases, social problem, moralisation of the masses, progress, and democracy, will have passed into the condition of lumber, and will seem as grotesque as those of sensibility, nature, predestined and gentle affinities, so much in fashion at the end of the eighteenth century.

‘It is because I believe in the perpetual evolution of humanity and its ever-changing forms that I hate all the frames into which people try to stuff it by force, all the formalities with which it is circumscribed, the plans that are dreamed of on its behalf. Democracy is no more its last word than slavery has been, than feudalism, than monarchy. The horizon perceived by human eyes is never the shore, because beyond this horizon there is another, and so on for ever! Thus to me it seems a silly form of insanity to seek for the best of religions, or the

best of governments. The best, so far as I am concerned, is the one which is on its deathbed, because it is making room for another.

‘I owe you a bit of a grudge for having said to me in one of your preceding letters that you wished for “compulsory education” for everybody. For my part, I abominate everything that is compulsory, every law, all government, all rule. Who are you, pray, O Society, to force me to anything? What God made you my master? Observe that you fall back into the old injustices of the past. The individual will no longer be oppressed by a despot, but by the crowd, the public benefit, the eternal “reasons of state,” that phrase of all peoples, the maxim of Robespierre. I prefer the desert; I return to the Bedouins, who are free. . . .’

These divagations are followed by a thoughtful review of some MSS. which Mademoiselle Leroyer de Chantepie had sent.

The following extract from a letter written at this time to Ernest Feydeau, who seems from other evidence to have been a person of a somewhat amusing, excessive vanity, gives an illustration of Flaubert’s conception of the claims of friendship :—

‘No, my dear sir, I have never perpetrated any meanness in relation to you, even by gesture; and before treating a man as a sneak, you should have proofs. I think this assumption gratuitous, and in the worst possible taste, my good fellow. I never allow anybody to run down my friends in my presence (it is a privilege that I reserve to myself). They belong to me: I allow no one to touch them. For the rest, cheer up! Your enemy, Aubryet, spoke no evil of your Lordship to me. I only saw him for about twenty minutes. As soon as dinner was finished he went on board. There—and you are an impatient fellow.

‘Your bad opinion of me comes from the fact that one day I did not take your side in an argument. The fact is that I thought you both equally ridiculous, and the meanness would have been to support theories that were not mine.

‘You shall pay me for all these insults in the review that I propose to write on your *Été*, big lunatic! Meanwhile you may boast of having written a certain seventeenth chapter, which is a gem.’

The letter ends humorously enough, but apparently did not satisfy the outraged Feydeau, for we have another, which begins as follows:—

‘My good fellow, I think it is always a proper thing to wash one’s dirty linen. Now I wash mine straight off. I did owe you a grudge, and I still owe you a bit of a grudge for having supposed that I said anything evil of your person or your works with Aubryet. I am now speaking very seriously. It shocked me, wounded me. That is the way I am made. Know that that particular form of meanness is completely antipathetic to me. I never allow anybody to say more evil to me of my friends than I am in the habit of saying to their faces. And when a stranger opens his mouth to abuse one of them, I promptly close it for him. The contrary proceeding is very fashionable, as I know, but it is no custom of mine. Let there be no further talk about it, and if you don’t understand me, so much the worse for you. Let us talk of less serious things, and do me the honour for the future not to judge of me as of the first person you meet.

‘Know besides, O Feydeau, that I never humbug. There is no more serious animal in the world than myself. I laugh sometimes, but joke very little, and less now than ever.’

Feydeau must have given occasion to many amusing scenes when in Flaubert’s society. For example:—

‘Why do you persist in torturing my nerves by maintaining against me that a plot of cabbages is *more* beautiful than the desert? You will permit me to beg you first to go and see the desert before talking about it. But in this preference given to the vulgar vegetable I can only see a desire to make me furious.’

Mademoiselle Leroyer de Chantepie could stir a gentler mood:—

‘Have you noticed how we love our sufferings? You cling

to your religious ideas, which cause you so much pain, and I to my chimera of style, which wears me out body and soul. But perhaps it is only by our sufferings that we are worth anything, for they are, after all, aspirations. There are so many people whose pleasures are so filthy, and ideal so limited, that we ought to bless our misfortunes if they make us more worthy. . . . Yes, one should read Spinoza. The people who accuse him of atheism are donkeys. Goethe used to say: "When I feel worried I read the *Ethics* (of Spinoza) over again." You will perhaps have the good fortune, like Goethe, to be calmed by this grand reading. I lost ten years ago the man whom I loved best in the world, Alfred Lepoittevin. In his last illness he spent his nights reading Spinoza.

'I have never known anybody (and I know a good many people) of so transcendental a mind as this friend of whom I tell you. We used sometimes to spend six continuous hours talking metaphysics. We have been *high*, I assure you. Since his death I converse with hardly any one; I chatter, or I hold my tongue. Alas! what a city of the dead is the human heart! Why go to the cemeteries? Let us open our reminiscences, how many tombs!

'How was your youth spent? Mine was very beautiful *inwardly*. I had enthusiasms which I now seek for in vain; friends, alas! who are dead or changed. A great confidence in myself, splendid leaps of the soul, something impetuous in my whole personality. I dreamed of love, glory, beauty. My heart was as wide as the world, and I breathed all the winds of heaven. And then gradually I have grown callous, tarnished. No! I accuse nobody but myself! I sank myself in absurd sentimental gymnastics. I took a pleasure in fighting my senses, and in torturing my heart. I repelled the human intoxications which were offered me. Furious with myself, I uprooted the man with both my hands, two hands full of pride and strength. I wished to make of that tree with verdant foliage a bare column to place on its summit, as on an altar, I know not what divine flame. . . . That is why I find myself at six-and-thirty so empty, and at times so fatigued! Is not this story of mine that I tell you a little like your own?'



Early in 1858 a letter to Madame Roger des Genettes contains the following passage:—

‘The manner in which all religions talk of God revolts me ; they treat Him with so much certainty, levity, familiarity. The priests, who have this name always on their lips, irritate me above all. It is with them a kind of chronic sneeze—“the goodness of God, the wrath of God, to offend God,” these are their phrases. It is considering Him as if He were a man, and, what’s worse, a middle-class man. They are further wild to decorate Him with attributes, as savages put feathers on their fetish. Some paint infinity blue, others black. Utter savagery all that. We are still cropping the grass, and walking on all-fours in spite of balloons. The ideal that humanity forms for itself of God does not go beyond that of an Oriental monarch surrounded by his court. The religious ideal is, in fact, several centuries behind the social ideal, and there are heaps of mountebanks who make a pretence of falling down faint with admiration in its presence.’

Mademoiselle Leroyer de Chantepie was by way of being an authoress, and Flaubert took pains to find suitable books for her to read, to criticise what she had already written ; at the same time he would expand in personal confidences ; he liked playing the part of spiritual director ; thus he says, writing on the 26th of December 1858:—

‘I seem to forget you ! Nothing of the kind ! My thoughts often travel to you, and I address prayers to the Unknown God of whom St. Paul spoke for the tranquillisation and satisfaction of your heart. You hold in my soul a very high—a very pure place—a wide space ; indeed, you would hardly credit the sentimental amazement that your first letters caused me. I am indebted to you for having felt myself at once better and more intelligent because of you.’

Two months later we have a letter which would have made our old friend Madame Colet rave:—

‘That is a sad story that of the young girl, your relative, who went mad in consequence of religious notions, but it is a com-

mon story. One must have a robust constitution to mount on the peaks of mysticism without losing one's head. And then in all that, and especially in the case of women, there are questions of temperament which complicate the malady. Do you not see that they are all in love with Adonis? What they ask for is the eternal husband. Ascetic or voluptuous, they still dream of love, of the great love; and to cure them (at any rate temporarily) they do not want an idea but a fact, a husband, a child, a lover. To you this seems equivocal. But I was not the inventor of human nature. I am convinced that the most extravagant material appetites are unconsciously formulated by bursts of idealism, in the same way that the most impure extravagances of the flesh are engendered by a pure longing for the impossible, an ethereal aspiration after the supreme pleasure. And further, I do not know, and nobody knows, what these two words *soul* and *body* mean; where the one ends and the other begins. We feel *forces*, and that is all. Materialism and spiritualism still weigh too heavily on the science of man to enable us to study all these phenomena impartially. The anatomy of the human heart has not yet been done. Then how can one cure it? It will be the special glory of the nineteenth century to have begun these researches. The *historic sense* is quite new in the world. People are now about beginning to study ideas like facts, and to dissect beliefs like organisms. There is a whole school working in the shade, and which will do something, of that I am sure.

‘Do you read the fine works of Renan? Do you know the books of Lanfrey, of Maury?’

‘As for me, in these latter days I have incidentally returned to those psycho-medical studies which charmed me so much ten years ago when I was writing my *Saint Anthony*. In connection with my *Salammbô*, I have occupied myself with hysteria and mental alienation. There are treasures to be discovered in all that. But life is short and art is long, indeed almost impossible when one is writing in a language worn down to the thread, worm-eaten, debilitated, and cracking under the finger at every effort. What despairs, what agonies are caused by this love of the *beautiful*! For the rest, I have undertaken an unrealisable task. Never mind! If I make some few noble imaginations

dream, I shall not have lost my time. I am barely yet at the quarter of my work. I have still enough to do for two years.'

This light thrown on the character of Salammbô is suggestive; without it the reader of the romance of Carthage would hardly have guessed the precise significance which Flaubert attached to the vague yearnings of his heroine, her prayers, her fastings, and religious exaltation.

Madame Roger des Genettes also consulted her director from time to time, 'the confessor of the ladies of disillusion,' as he once styled himself in writing to Georges Sand.

'Your letter of this morning made me think for a long while. I prefer these truthful cries to efforts to laugh and joke; for you are entirely ignorant of what joy really is. You want that energy, that natural gift. Then weep freely on the heart of your friend; he will try to wipe away your tears, although he is wounded by your injustice. You say you do not know me any more than a language of which one writes but a few words. And yet what have I concealed from you? It seems to me that I am naturally open. Nothing is less complicated than my mind. But you have been spoiled by the world, and Catholicism. You are full of sophistries, and confused sentiments which prevent you from seeing truth. God had made you better, and it is for that reason that I love you, for you must have suffered horribly, and you suffer still, poor dear friend!

'For my part, I presume to say that I know you; now in your life and in your soul I catch glimpses of gulfs of weariness and sorrows, a solitude, an eternal Sahara, which you traverse ceaselessly. I know nobody so profoundly sceptical as you are, and you torture yourself in every possible way to believe. I irritate you horribly, and perhaps that is the very reason why you cling to me. I find fault with you for having treated me like anybody else, when I loved you, as nobody will love you. . . .

'... It is however so easy to have a coal-heaver's faith, to admire what is admirable, to laugh at what is funny, to hate the ugly, the false, the obscure, to be, in one word, *human*, I do

not say humanitarian, to read history, and to warm oneself in the sun! So little is wanted to fill a human soul! I hear the objection by anticipation; I see coming up the long row of those who have sung of the insufficiency of earthly life, of the nothingness of science, the natural feebleness of human affections. But are you quite sure of knowing life? Have you been to the bottom of science? Are you not too feeble for passion? Do not let us find fault with alcohol, but with our own digestive organs, or our own intemperance. Who is there among us who unceasingly struggles to bring himself nearer to God without hope of reward, without personal interest, without expectation of profit? Who is there who works to be bigger and better, to love more strongly, to feel more intensely, to understand more? . . .

‘. . . You know well that I do not share your opinion of the personality of M. de Voltaire in any way. For me he is a *saint*. Why persist in seeing a low comedian in a man who was a fanatic? M. de Maistre has said of him, in his treatise on sacrifices, “There is no flower in the garden of intellect which has not been defiled by this caterpillar.” I can no more forgive M. de Maistre for this phrase than I pardon MM. Stendhal, Veuillot, Proudhon, for all their verdicts. The consumptive, anti-artistic breed is the same. Temperament stands for a good deal in our literary affections. Now I like the great Voltaire as much as I detest the great Rousseau; and I take the difference in our estimates very much to heart. I am surprised that you do not admire this great pulse, which moved the world. Can such results be obtained by the insincere? In this verdict of yours you belong to the school of the eighteenth century which saw in religious enthusiasm only the mummery of priests. Let us bow before all altars. In short, that particular man seems to me burning, eager, convinced, superb. His “Let us crush the infamous” affects me like the shout of a crusade. His whole intellect was an engine of war. And what makes me particularly fond of him is the disgust with which the Voltairians inspire me; people who laugh at great things! Did he laugh—he? He gnashed his teeth. . . .”

Eight years later Flaubert wrote the following letter to



Mademoiselle Leroyer de Chantepie, with whom he still maintained an intermittent correspondence:—

‘PARIS, June 16, 1867.

‘The pleasure that it gives me to receive your letters, dear lady, is counterbalanced by the sorrow that is revealed in them. What a fine soul you possess! and what a dismal existence is yours! I think I understand it. That is why I love you.

‘I, like you, have known the intense melancholy which the *Angelus* brings on summer evenings. Calm as I am on the surface, I too have been ravaged, and—must I say it?—am still so sometimes. But convinced of this truth, that as soon as a man thinks of himself he is ill, I try to intoxicate myself with art as others do with brandy. By mere strength of will one arrives at losing the notion of one’s own personality. Believe me, one is not happy, but one suffers less.

‘No—undeceive yourself! I never scoff at your religious sentiments, not even in the deepest depths of my consciousness. All piety attracts me, and Catholic piety above all. But I do not understand the *nature* of your doubts. Have they reference to dogma, or to yourself? If I understand what you write to me, it seems to me that you feel yourself *unworthy*. Then be comforted, for you sin by excess of humility, which is a great virtue. Unworthy! Why? Poor dear sorrowing soul that you are! Take heart. Your God is good, and you have suffered enough to make Him love you. But if you have doubts of the very foundations of religion (and this is what I believe, whatever you may say), why distress yourself about failing in duties which then cease to be duties? Suppose a sincere Catholic to turn Mussulman (for one motive or another); that is a crime in the eyes of religion, as in those of philosophy; but if this Catholic is not a believer, his change of religion has no more importance than a change of coat. Everything depends upon the value which we assign to things. We ourselves make morality and virtue. The cannibal, who eats his fellow, is as innocent as the child who sucks his barley-sugar. Why then afflict yourself at not being able to confess or to communicate, since you *cannot*? From the moment that this duty is no longer practicable it ceases to be a duty. But no! The

admiration that you evince for Jean Reynaud proves to me that you are full in the current of contemporary criticism, and yet you cling by inclination, by habit, and by your personal nature to the beliefs of the past. If you wish to get out of this difficulty, I repeat to you, you must take a line; resolutely fling yourself upon the one or the other. Be with Saint Theresa or Voltaire. Whatever people may say, there is no mean term.

‘Humanity at the present day is exactly like you. The blood of the Middle Ages still pulses in its veins, and it pants for the mighty air of future centuries, which only bring it storms.

‘And all that because one insists on a solution. Oh, pride of man! A solution! The end! The Cause! But we should be God if we held the cause, and the further we go the further it will retire, infinitely, because our horizon will widen. The more perfect the telescopes, the more numerous the stars. We are condemned to roll in darkness and tears.

‘When I look at one of those little stars in the Milky Way, I say to myself that the earth is no bigger than one of those sparks. And I, who gravitate for a moment upon that spark, who am I? What are we? This sentiment of my lowness, of my insignificance, comforts me. I seem to have become a grain of dust lost in space, and yet I form a part of the unlimited greatness which enfolds me. I have never understood that that could be a despairing idea; for it might well be, that behind the black curtain there was nothing. The infinite, for the rest, sinks all our conceptions, and from the moment that *it is*, why should there be an end for so relative a thing as ourselves?

‘Imagine a man who, with balances a thousand cubits high, should wish to weigh the sand of the sea. When he had filled his two scales they would overflow, and his work would be no further advanced than at the beginning.

‘All the philosophies are at that point. They may say, if they please, “Still there is a weight, there is a certain figure which we should know, let us try,” the scales are magnified, the rope breaks, and always, always so! Then be more *Christian*, and resign yourself to ignorance. You ask me what books to read. Read Montaigne; read him slowly, steadily. He will *calm* you.

And do not listen to people who talk of his egotism. You will like him, you will see. But do not read, as the children read, to amuse yourself, nor as ambitious people read, to get instruction. No! *read to live!* Make an intellectual atmosphere for your soul, which shall be composed of the emanation of all the great minds. Study Shakespeare and Goethe thoroughly. Read translations of the Greek and Roman authors,—Homer, Petronius, Plautus, Apuleius, etc. And when something bores you, fling yourself into it, you will soon understand it. That will be a satisfaction for you. It is a question of *working*, do you understand me? I do not like seeing a nature so fine as yours engulfed in vexation and idleness. Widen your horizon, and you will breathe more freely. If you were a man, and were only twenty years old, I would advise you to travel round the world. Well—make the tour of the world in your own room! Study a thing that you have no suspicion of—the World! But I recommend you Montaigne before everything else. Read him from one end to the other, and when you have got to the end, begin again. The advice (doctor's advice doubtless) that is given to you seems to me unintelligent. You must, on the contrary, fatigue your thought. Do not believe that it is worn out. It is not from cramp that it is suffering, but from convulsions. These folk for the rest understand nothing of the soul. I know them,—there!"

Flaubert never met Mademoiselle Leroyer de Chantepie. If he had done so, what then? To us she appears, through his letters, a somewhat vaporous and sentimental female, who hooked herself on to the author of *Madame Bovary*, touched the string of tenderness in him, and was initiated, as a reward, into mysteries beyond her comprehension. Whether she was comforted in the contemplation of her own nothingness is open to doubt; but, for all that, Flaubert's position with regard to religion is an essentially sound one. What we are concerned with is the rules which regulate the infinitely little corner of space in which we live, our own immediate surroundings. Philosophers may define God and the Infinite

as they please, none the less we have to eat our three square meals a day, and accommodate ourselves to the convictions of those around us; if we cannot fit to the measure of our neighbours, the only comfort to be found is in intellectually testing it, and rising above it. To be irritated at it is essentially feeble; the motives which impel the different individuals who form the society in which we perforce live are by us unalterable; then let us understand them; and to understand them we must study in considerable detail our own little corner of space. We may arrive at the conclusion at which Flaubert arrived, that though the basis of morality is not demonstrably supernatural, the necessity of morality in civilised society is inevitable.

It is, in fact, not possible to construct any ethical system whereby it could be demonstrated to the common man that, from a self-regarding point of view, it is to his advantage to deny himself the gratification of his passions, except in cases in which his bodily health is immediately affected; and the association of morality with supernatural sanctions is simply a statement of this fact; on the other hand, that human society is impossible where the individual emancipates himself from self-denial and self-control, is equally obvious. Therefore the man who refuses the supernatural sanction is none the less bound to accept the moral restraints imposed by the conditions of the society in which he lives. He wastes his time if he battles with them; he is apt to be martyred if he makes war upon the creed with which they are supposed to be inextricably involved.

The man who makes himself miserable because he cannot accept the religious convictions of his neighbour is intellectually absurd; for he must either know more, in which case he should congratulate himself, or feel himself below these convictions, in which case he should study them, live up to



them; he still has an ambition and a standard. The one point on which Flaubert only lightly touched—the hold that the outward practices enjoined by religion still maintain upon the person who has begun to apply criticism to them—is after all the real practical difficulty. At the bottom it is not the loss of faith which the sceptically-minded person regrets, it is the companionship of the human beings to whom he has been accustomed. Intellectually it was quite correct to say that the sorrows of the sceptic arise from not going far enough, from trying to halt between St. Theresa and Voltaire; that the student of humanity, the man who does not set himself to build up an ideal of what men should be, but who fearlessly tries to find out what man *is*, has no further need to vex himself with his own shortcomings in the matter of religious conviction. But this intellectual wellbeing will not comfort the son who finds that between himself and a dearly loved mother a wall has grown up, that a whole world of sympathies which they shared has become on his side a region which is entered with conscious concession to weakness; worse than all, that she cannot accept the concession. Flaubert himself was never called upon to grapple with this particular trouble, and for that reason he underrates its magnitude in all its varieties. Nor had he any experience of the terrible isolation of the dissident. It is from this that the majority of sceptical souls shrink. The long process by which the savage has been tamed into the civilised or civilisable man has left its impress upon each individual in many ways; the dread of solitariness is part of the price which the individual has to pay for the comfort of society.

Flaubert never attempted to construct a system; his letters were not written for publication, and those who endeavour to find a system in them, or construct a system

out of them, will be woefully disappointed. On the other hand, it is good to know how he expressed himself intimately on the questions of faith and creed, if only as a contradiction to the prevalent assumption that a person who intellectually rejects a creed necessarily quarrels with it or scoffs at it. There is a reverent revolt as well as an irreverent rejection; and it is possible to acknowledge with all humility that the religious attitude 'makes for righteousness'; also to feel that the mere scoffer is infinitely contemptible, though the personality of particular upholders of this or that dogma may be open to ridicule, and even to stronger condemnation. When Napoleon III. took religion under his protection the bitter speech was inevitable; but it was not religion that was the object of Flaubert's mockery, rather those mean-spirited officials of religion who could accept for their faith the patronage of a Louis Napoleon.

Flaubert's intellectual position on religious questions is clearly seen in the *St. Anthony*; his estimate of the scoffer in the person of Homais; while the Abbé Bournisien, in spite of his mental incapacity, is one of the very few characters in *Madame Bovary* whom one is disposed to respect.

## CHAPTER XVI

DEATH OF LOUIS BOUILHET—HIS ARTISTIC IDEALS—FLAUBERT'S  
LETTER TO THE TOWN COUNCIL OF ROUEN

IN 1869 Flaubert suffered a great loss. Louis Bouilhet died on the 18th July. In the annals of friendship it is not easy to find a pair who were so closely united as these two men. Both had other friends, women as well as men, but the tie which bound them was never strained by jealousy or weakened by diffusion of affection.

There are comparatively few letters to Bouilhet; for many years the friends met regularly once a week, and the periods during which they were separated were not of long duration.

For Bouilhet Flaubert would do what he would not do for himself,—assail publishers, storm theatres, placard advertisements; when 'Madame de Montarcy' was produced at the Odéon, Flaubert simply took possession of the stage, the actors, the box-office, the attendants in the theatre; at the rehearsals he carried all before him in a whirlwind of flying dressing-gown; and after the poet's death he broke out of his literary seclusion to superintend in the same way the production of 'Mademoiselle Aïssé.' On the other hand, Louis Bouilhet was, as we have seen, the one person who could repress Flaubert's literary extravagances, and who did so; he was the one critic whose censures and corrections Flaubert accepted without subsequent resentment. He often fought against them at the time, raved, howled, entreated,

implored, but Bouilhet was immovable; and when Flaubert had once submitted to him, he kept faith.

The following touching sentence in a letter written to Jules Duplan just after Bouilhet's death, and whose substance is often repeated in the correspondence, sufficiently indicates the strength and the nature of the union between these two men:—

‘Your poor giant has suffered a rude buffet, from which he will not recover. I say to myself, ‘Why write now, since he is no longer there?’ It is all over: those good bouts of howling verses, the enthusiasms in common, the future works dreamed of together. One should be “philosophical and a man of intellect”; but it is not easy.’

As usual on the death of an intimate friend, Flaubert wrote to Maxime Ducamp; one passage in the letter reminds us again of the grotesque, which ever waited on Flaubert:—

‘From Paris to Rouen in a carriage full of people. I had opposite me a damsel who smoked cigarettes, stretched her feet on the seat, and sang. On seeing the steeples of Mantes again (where Bouilhet had lived for some time) I thought I was going mad, and I am sure I was not far from it. Seeing me very pale, the young lady offered me eau-de-Cologne. That revived me, but what a thirst! That in the desert of Qôseir was nothing in comparison.’

Maxime Ducamp in his *Literary Reminiscences* somewhat disparages the friendship between Flaubert and Bouilhet, suggests that the friends injured one another by their mutual admiration; each would have done more had it not been for the friend, and so forth; this too at the same time that he praises the rigour with which Bouilhet lopped off Flaubert's excrescences. It is difficult to determine in such cases the exact nature of the influence exercised by a pair of friends upon one another; for this influence is certainly not limited



to mutual criticism ; there is also the stimulus of the wish to please the friend, to justify his affection by adequate performance. Bouilhet, though bold enough with his pen, was deficient in self-assurance, easily disconcerted by publishers and theatrical managers ; Flaubert found courage for him ; pushed him where he would not push himself ; eventually secured his election as librarian at Rouen, in the hope that financial ease might give him a fair opportunity of putting forth all his power. Unfortunately the well-meant gift came too late : the poet was already stricken with the enervating malady which killed him. Of the intimate nature of the friendship between the two men, the depth of their affection for one another, there is abundant evidence ; Flaubert's few published letters to Bouilhet are written with a spontaneity which distinguishes them even in his unreserved correspondence. There is a certainty of comprehension in them which there is not always in his letters. Outwardly, in spite of the great difference in manner—Flaubert noisy, impetuous, Bouilhet shrinking, reserved,—there was a strong personal resemblance between the friends ; they were frequently taken for brothers.

It is further more difficult for an Englishman than a Frenchman to estimate Flaubert's literary influence upon Bouilhet, for Bouilhet wrote nothing but verse, and the mystery of the melody of French poetry is to Englishmen a sealed book ; few Englishmen can even hear the distinctions between French vowel-sounds, and it is in their skilful combination that the merit of a French poem is said to consist. On the other hand, in spite of Maxime Ducamp's praise of Bouilhet's rigid censure of the superabundant in Flaubert, it was not till after the death of Bouilhet that the three short stories were written in which this particular defect is absent, while the *Education Sentimentale* in which Ducamp deplores

the absence of Bouilhet's control was written during his lifetime and published immediately after his death; it must have enjoyed considerable revision by him.

The conclusion of Flaubert's preface to Bouilhet's posthumous volume of poems shows what Flaubert believed to be his friend's artistic position; one is inclined to suspect that it is to some extent also a position which Flaubert made for him:—

‘He thought that Art is a serious thing, whose aim is to produce a vague exaltation, and even that all its morality lies in that. I extract from a note-book the three following passages :

“In poetry the question whether the morals are virtuous should not be considered, but whether they are in accordance with those of the person represented. Accordingly poetry describes good and bad actions for us indifferently, without offering the latter to us as an example.”—PIERRE CORNEILLE.

“Art should only think in her creations of those faculties which really have the right to judge her. If she does otherwise, she walks in a wrong road.”—GOETHE.

“All the intellectual beauties that are to be discovered in a fine style, all the complex relations which form it, are so many truths as useful to the public intelligence as those which form the essence of the subject, and perhaps more valuable.”—BUFFON.

‘Thus Art having her own end in herself should not be considered as a means. In spite of all the genius that could be put into the development of one story, another might serve to prove the contrary; for the ends of plots are not conclusions; from a particular case general deductions cannot be made: and those who think themselves in that matter progressive, run counter to modern science, which demands the accumulation of a number of facts before a law is established.

‘Accordingly Bouilhet gave a wide berth to that *preaching form of Art* which claims to instruct, correct, make moral. He thought still less of the *toy-shop Art*, which aims at amusing, like a game of cards, or causing emotion like an assize court; and he did not use the *democratic Art*, being convinced that its form, to be accessible to all, would have to descend very low, and

that in civilised ages one becomes silly when one tries to be simple. As for *official Art*, he rejected its advantages, because he would have been obliged to defend causes which are not eternal.

‘Shunning paradox, morbid conditions, curiosities, all the short paths, he took the high road, that is to say the ordinary sentiments, the unchangeable sides of the human soul. And as “ideas form the essence of style,” he tried to think clearly, in order to write well. Never did he say :

“ *The play is a good one, if Sal has shed tears,*”

he who wrote plays that moved to weeping, for he did not believe that emotion can take the place of artistic method.

‘He hated the modern maxim that “one should write as one speaks.” In fact, the care given to a work, the long research, the time, the trouble, all that was formerly a recommendation, has now become a laughing-stock, so superior are we to all that kind of thing, so overflowing with genius and facility.

‘Not that he was wanting in this respect: his actors have seen him make considerable corrections in their very midst. “Inspiration,” he would say, “should be invited, not submitted to.”

‘Plastic being the first quality of Art, he gave his conceptions the strongest possible relief, following that same Buffon, who recommends that each idea should be expressed by an image. But middle-class people are of opinion, so spiritual are they, that colour is too material a thing to express sentiment, and their French common sense, so comfortable on its peaceful hobby, is afraid of being carried off to the skies, and cries every moment: “Too many metaphors!” as if it had a stock of them for sale.

‘Few authors have taken such care in the choice of words, the variety of periods, transitions,—and he never conceded the title of writer to one who possesses only certain parts of style. How many of those most highly extolled would be incapable of constructing a narrative, joining end to end in an analysis, a portrait, a dialogue!

‘He intoxicated himself with the rhythm of verses, the cadence of prose, which should, like verse, be able to be read aloud. Badly written phrases cannot stand this test; they weigh on the

chest, disturb the action of the heart, and are thus outside the conditions of healthy life.

‘His liberality of view made him admit all schools; Shakespeare and Boileau elbowed one another on his table.

‘Of the Greeks he preferred first the *Odyssey*, then Aristophanes the immense, and among the Latins, not the authors of the Augustan era (except Virgil), but the others, who have somewhat more stiffness, sonority, as Tacitus and Juvenal. He had studied Apuleius deeply.

‘He used to read Rabelais continually, liked Corneille and Lafontaine: nor did his romanticism prevent him from extolling Voltaire.

‘But he hated Academy speeches, apostrophes to God, advice to the people, what smells of the sewer, what stinks of vanilla, the poetry of the pot-house, and dandified literature, the pontifical style, and the style of the shirt-maker.

‘Many refinements were completely foreign to him, such as the idolatry of the eighteenth century, the admiration of the style of Calvin, the unceasing lamentation over the decadence of the Arts. He had very little respect for M. de Maistre. He was not dazzled by Proudhon.

‘According to him, sober minds were merely poor minds; and he abominated that sham good taste which is more execrable than bad, discussions upon the beautiful, the cackle of criticism. He would have been hung rather than write a preface. Here is something which will say all this at greater length: it is a page of a scribbling book entitled “Notes and Plans”—plans!

‘“The present century is essentially pædagogic. There is not a scribbler who does not reel off his harangue, no book, however feeble, which does not hoist itself into a pulpit! As to form, it is proscribed. If you have the fortune to write well, you are accused of wanting ideas. Wanting ideas! Good God! One must be fool enough, indeed, to do without them considering the price they cost. The recipe is simple; with two or three words: *future, progress, society*, you are a poet, were you Topinambo himself! A comfortable labour which encourages fools, and consoles the envious. O stinking mediocrity! Utilitarian poetry! Usher’s literature! Æsthetic gabblings, economical eructations, scrofulous productions of an exhausted race, I hate



you with all the power of my soul. You are not gangrene, you are atrophy! You are not the red warm inflammation of the periods of fever, but the chill abscess with its pale edges, which comes down like a spring from some depth of internal rottenness!"

'The day after his death Théophile Gauthier wrote: "He carried high the old banner, torn in so many conflicts; we may wrap ourselves in it, as in a shroud. The brave band of Hernani is no more." That is true. His was an existence entirely devoted to the ideal, one of those rare henchmen of literature for literature's sake, the last fanatics of a religion near its extinction—or extinct.

"A genius of the second order," some will say. But those of the fourth are not now so very common. Look how the desert widens! a wind of inanity, a waterspout of vulgarity, envelops us, ready to cover up every height, every elegance. People feel happy now in not respecting great men; and maybe we are on the point of losing, along with the literary tradition, that indefinable aerial something which used to put into life itself something higher than life. To create lasting works one should not laugh at glory. A little wit is gained by the cultivation of imagination, and much nobility by the contemplation of fine things.'

Such was Flaubert's conception of Bouilhet's literary ideal; or is he only putting his own views in the mouth of his dead friend? Unquestionably the friends thought alike, and it was their loudly proclaimed doctrine of 'Art for Art's sake' which was so annoying to serious-minded persons like Maxime Ducamp.

This doctrine, like every other dogma, must be studied rather with a view to what it contradicts than to what it affirms. There are people who seriously maintain that 'novels with a purpose' are superior to all other romances. Mr. Walter Besant's later books are therefore superior to the Waverley Novels; and on what a sublime throne is elevated Madame Sarah Grand with her *Heavenly Twins*!

Roughly speaking, literary men are divided into two not necessarily conflicting schools; there is the school of matter and the school of form. Of these schools the Teutonic genius inclines to the first, the Latin to the second. In Greek literature both are found in their completest expression. Latin and its eldest daughter Italian give us the most artificial literary forms that have been used. Compare Virgil's *Æneid* with the *Odyssey*, the *Sonnets* of Petrarch with Chaucer's *Passionate Pilgrim*, the prose of Tacitus with the prose of Plato; in the three Latin authors you feel that the style is everything; in the others that it is something, but not everything. Or, again, read a play of Shakespeare, and afterwards the *Ædipus Rex*; both have matter, ideas; but the wealth of the one is as incomparable with the other as is the irregularity of the English poet with the stately forms of the Greek.

Perfection lies in having something to say, and in saying it in the best possible manner; but it cannot be denied that great pleasure may be derived from works in which much is said badly, and also from those in which a little is said well. There are times when, and places where, the pendulum of taste swings unduly in one direction or the other. On the whole, the French tendency is towards form, the English tendency towards matter; yet England has produced Milton, and France Rabelais.

The other question, as to whether the artist should be a preacher or no, is one of extreme difficulty. To deny that moral beauty is a fit subject for art is absurd; and it is equally ridiculous to declare a work of art immoral which does not obviously teach a lesson. In his paradoxical moods Flaubert would assert that an effective description of a sunset was essentially no more beautiful than the description of a disembowelled ox. The artistic power of reproducing

the sensations with which the one or the other is contemplated being the achievement. We are disposed to quarrel with him when he makes this assertion ; and yet we willingly admit that the power of portraying moral hideousness is as high an artistic accomplishment as that of depicting moral beauty.

The province of literature is not settled by argumentation ; the question to be scientifically decided is not what *should be* the aim of literature, but what *does* literature actually effect ? A very small literary experience is enough to show that in the art of letters, as in all other arts, there are always a few technical proficientes possessing the highest possible skill in the manipulation of material, in the choice of words, the laying on of colour, the grip of the bow upon the string, whose performance raises and maintains the standard of the mass, and whose methods, falling at rare intervals into the hands of the man of genius, give us the imperishable works.

For artistic conscience will not of itself alone give birth to the completest works of art, though without it there can be no art. Flaubert himself has said that the most perfect technical performance is not to be looked for in the giants, in the Shakespeares, but in the men of the second rank, in the Molières. To a few men the intelligent contemplation of perfect artistic performance is in the highest degree chastening and salutary, to them, as to Flaubert, there exists neither purity nor impurity in art ; your true book cannot be impure. But there are two difficulties which always beset the question of the artist's morality : one is the fact that the mass do not appreciate works of art with an artist's eyes ; in looking at a picture they do not look only for beauty, they look for a story, a suggestion, the wakening of a reminiscence ; they prefer Frith's 'Derby Day' or Luke

Fildes' 'Rustic Wedding' to the 'Madonna di San Sisto,' Landseer to Alma Tadema ; and another fact is that, books being scattered broadcast, a perfectly artistic presentment of debauchery despised by the author may prove over-attractive to the imagination of the inexperienced reader. The passions are capable of being stimulated (sometimes unhealthily) by literature ; and this is the reason why the statement that 'Art has no morality' shocks most of us. Flaubert would say that the unhealthy stimulus is unhealthy because the presentment of the facts is incomplete ; and would further urge against the preaching books, that they are seriously demoralising, because they misrepresent the facts of life ; that optimistic literature encourages tendencies which are inherently unsound ; in the long-run even dangerous to the wellbeing of society. His protest is not unneeded ; especially in our own country, where the tendency-literature is paramount, and where its attractions have spoiled many a good artist ; if Carlyle had been content to be a humourist, Dickens forborne to meddle with social reforms, Thackeray abstained from moralising, Kingsley not been a clergyman, George Eliot forgotten to philosophise ! England, however, can certainly boast of having produced one prose author who has religiously followed Flaubert's canons of art with complete success. Robert Louis Stevenson's *New Arabian Nights* are irresistible, and their attraction is so obviously independent of their subject-matter that we are forced to admit that never was the story-telling art, as an art, carried to higher perfection.

One other aspect of 'Art for Art's sake' deserves a moment's attention, and that is its commercial aspect ; naturally neither Flaubert nor Bouilhet would hear of writing with one eye on the financial profits of the work ; and in this relation Flaubert made a profound remark :



‘Works that are written for all time cannot expect to be paid for by the generation which happens to be living when they come into existence.’ Those works are most likely to be highly paid for by the current generation, which hit its purely ephemeral conditions.

Even a sharp contrast with the prevailing fashion may give a book a wholly undeserved and short-lived popularity; and its author will be proportionately overpaid. On the other hand, there are works deliberately written with a view to contemporary events which prove to be immortal owing to the surpassing merit of their style. Will *Gulliver’s Travels* ever cease to be read? or the *Clouds* of Aristophanes?

Flaubert’s friends did not like being told that they had no business to think of the pecuniary profits of literature, and sometimes unkindly suggested that he could afford to talk in this way, being in the fortunate enjoyment of an independent fortune; but the doctrine was equally loudly upheld by Bouilhet, who had nothing.

On the whole, Flaubert’s dogma was a healthy one; it could be misapplied, and has in more than one instance been abused; but it impelled the young men to take pains, and mistrust the success of the feuilleton.

On the day of Louis Bouilhet’s funeral a movement was started to raise a fund in order to establish some permanent memorial of the poet in Rouen. In a very short time over six hundred pounds was subscribed, and an application was made to the Municipal Council of Rouen for leave to erect in some public place a fountain ornamented with the poet’s bust. For some inscrutable reason the Councillors rejected the gift, and Flaubert then addressed a letter to them, which was published in the papers, to the horror of the gentle Ducamp, and probably many other quiet folk. With slashing logic the enraged Flaubert demolished the alleged

reasons given by the Town Council for their action, held up to ridicule the verses of one of their number who had been so ill advised as to communicate doggerel rhymes to the Rouen Academy, of which he was a member, and concluded with an address to middle-class people in general, which is well worth studying and taking to heart. It was written after the Franco-Prussian war.

‘This affair in itself is a very small matter. But one can note it as a sign of the times—as a trait characteristic of your class; and it is no longer to you, gentlemen, that I address myself, but to all middle-class folk. Then I say to them:

“Ye conservatives who preserve nothing,” it is high time to tread in another path—and since the talk is of regeneration, of decentralisation, change your habits of mind! Do at last have some initiative!

‘The French nobility came to grief through having had the sentiments of a flunkeydom for two centuries. The end of the middle-class is coming, because it has those of the people. I do not see that it reads other newspapers, that it treats itself to other music, that it has more elevated pleasures. With the one as with the other there is the same love of money, the same respect for the accomplished fact, the same need of idols to destroy, the same hatred of all superiority, the same crass ignorance!

‘There are seven hundred of you in the National Assembly. How many of those are there who can tell the names of the principal treaties in our history, or the dates of six kings of France? who know the first elements of political economy? who have read even Bastiat? The Municipality of Rouen, which has denied as a body the merit of a poet, is possibly ignorant of the rules of versification. And it has no need to know them, so long as it does not meddle with verses.

‘To be respected by what is below you, please to respect what is above you!

‘Before sending the people to school, go there yourselves!

‘Enlightened classes, seek enlightenment. Because of this contempt for intelligence you think yourselves full of good

sense, positive, practical ! But one is only really practical on condition of being a little more so. . . . You would not be enjoying all the benefits of commerce if your fathers of the eighteenth century had had no ideal except that of material utility. Germany has been sufficiently joked, I presume, on the subject of her theorists, her dreamers, her misty poets ! You have seen, alas ! where her mists have brought her ! Your milliards have paid her for all the time that she had not wasted in constructing systems. I have an idea that the dreamer Fichte re-organised the Prussian army after Jena, and that the poet Koerner sent some Uhlans against us about the year 1813.

‘ You, practical ! Come now ! You do not know how to hold either a pen or a rifle ! You allow yourselves to be robbed, imprisoned, murdered by mere criminals ! You have not even the brute instinct of self-defence, and when the question is not merely of your skins, but of your purse, which should be dearer to you, energy fails you to go and put a bit of paper in a box ! With all your capital and all your sober sense, you cannot form an association equal to the International !

‘ Your whole intellectual effort consists in trembling before the future.

‘ Bethink yourselves of something else. Rouse yourselves, or France will soon sink deeper and deeper into the gulf, between a hideous demagogy and a mindless middle-class.’

Can this be that same French middle-class that Mr. Matthew Arnold was wont to hold up to Englishmen as a brilliant example ?

## CHAPTER XVII

THE 'ÉDUCATION SENTIMENTALE'—THE FRANCO-PRUSSIAN WAR  
—LETTERS TO GEORGE SAND—DEATH OF HIS MOTHER

THE *Éducation Sentimentale* had the misfortune to be published just when the great war was impending; other things were more in the minds of men than the last novel. Worse than that, many of the characters were recognisable under their disguises; there was a silent, unconscious conspiracy to let the book drop unnoticed, if possible; and the book was dropped.

It is, however, not improbable that of contemporary novels this one will have the longest life, but not on its merits as a romance: it will always be deeply interesting to the historical student. In spite of his professed contempt for the popular judgment, Flaubert was hurt, amazed, unsettled by the cold reception given to his work. He writes to George Sand:—

'Your old troubadour is mightily blackened by the press. Read the *Constitutionnel* of last Monday, the *Gaulois* of this morning; that's square and clear. I am treated as an idiot and a rascal. The article of Barbey d'Aureville is a model in this style, and that of the good Sarcey, although less violent, is not an inch behind him. These gentlemen protest in the name of morality and the Ideal. I have also had some gashes in the *Figaro* and in *Paris* by Cesena and Duranty. I don't care a snap! That, however, does not prevent my being astounded at so much hatred and falseness. The *Tribune*, the



*Pays*, and the *Opinion Nationale* have in compensation highly extolled me. As for the friends, the persons, who have received a copy ornamented with my fist, they are afraid of compromising themselves, and speak to me of something else. The honest fellows are scarce. None the less, the book sells well in spite of politics, and Lévy seems to me satisfied.

‘I know that the good folk of Rouen are furious with me, because of old Roque and the cancan in the Tuileries. They think that the publication of books like that ought to be prevented (textual), that I lend a hand to the Reds, that I am even capable of stirring the fire of revolutionary passions, etc. etc. In short, up to the present I gather but few laurels, and no rose-leaf wounds me.

‘Sarcey has published a second article against me.

‘Barbey d’Aurevilly will have it that I defile the stream by washing in it (*sic*).’

A year or two later Flaubert used to protest that the horrors of 1870, and the political chaos that followed, might have been averted had the French people read and understood his *Éducation Sentimentale*; and he was right. But a book that requires to be understood in the way that this book requires understanding, is not a book that can be read by many. The book is, in fact, an elaborate analysis of Parisian upper and lower middle-class society in the middle of the century; a historical study, not a romance; the ideas prevalent at the period are personified, and in not a few cases real persons thinly disguised represent the ideas. The individual through whom we see them all, the hero of the romance, is probably in himself one of the least interesting figures in fiction. Arthur Pendennis is vapid enough, but Frédéric Moreau is of a hundred Arthur Pendennis power. A man devoid of vice and virtue, unstable, heartless, whose chief impelling motive of action of any sort is a feeble flickering vanity, helped on occasionally by an equally feeble lustfulness, he stands out, even in the confraternity of the

weak-kneed heroes of feminine fiction, as the most tiresome of male human beings. And yet how appallingly true he is! As well known in Hyde Park as on the Boulevards, in the Temple as in the Quartier Latin. Equally well drawn are a lady of worse than doubtful reputation, a rascally middle-class dealer of the type whose matrimonial infelicities have now expelled those of the aristocracy from the London Divorce Courts, a banker who is a politician, and one Deslauriers, the friend of Frédéric's youth, one of those men 'who are never so pleased as when they are urging their friends to do what they do not like.'

Of action there is plenty, including all the street-fighting of 1848, of plot next to none, development of character almost as little. Still, the book is worth reading, and re-reading; but it will never carry the votes of the comfortable middle-class folk, who believe themselves to live in the best of all possible worlds, and only ask of fate to be allowed to cultivate their gardens peaceably in the intervals of irresponsible gossip.

The almost absolute exclusion from this book of real tenderness of heart is particularly striking. Of all men, Flaubert must have known that disinterested affection is not an uncommon motive influencing the actions of the most unlikely people. No man did more for his friends, no man did more for his family; there never was a man so well loved, or who loved so well; and yet in a very full—an over-full—picture of society at a particular epoch, he deliberately omits the most ordinary affection. The friendship between the hero and Deslauriers is repeatedly ridiculed, and is helpful to neither. The genuine gratitude of one Dussardier, a young shopman, to Moreau and his friends is slurred over. Flaubert's revolt against optimism has been carried too far. Or may it not be that men's ideas were more interesting to Flaubert than

their affections—the weaknesses of their intellects a more attractive subject than the sufferings of their hearts? In fact, the satirist had not yet found his form. He was still fettered by the necessity of writing a romance, and therefore could not say, what was burning on his lips, in the most effective fashion.

After the publication of the *Éducation Sentimentale*, Flaubert found some difficulty in setting to work again; he missed Bouilhet profoundly. He writes to George Sand:—

‘In losing my poor Bouilhet I have lost my man-midwife; the man who saw more clearly into my own thoughts than I saw myself. His death has left me a void which I perceive more plainly every day.

‘I no longer feel the need to write, because I used to write specially for one single being who is no more. That is the truth! And yet I shall continue to write. But the taste is no longer there, the pre-occupation is gone. There are so few people who love what I love, who concern themselves with what I find absorbing. Do you know in this Paris, which is so great, one single house in which literature is talked about? And when it is incidentally approached, it is always by its subaltern and exterior sides, the question of success, morality, utility, etc. It seems to me that I am becoming a fossil, a being without any relation to the surrounding creation.’

And again, writing to Edmond de Goncourt on the death of his brother:—

‘You wish me to speak to you of myself, my dear Edmond? Well, I am giving myself up to a work which causes me great pain, for I am writing the preface to Bouilhet’s volume. I have passed as lightly as possible over the biographical part. I shall expand more on his (or our) literary doctrines.

‘I have re-read all that he has written. I have turned over our old letters. I have stirred a series of reminiscences, some of which are thirty-seven years old! It is not a very gay business, as you see. Besides, here at Croisset I am pursued by his

phantom, which I find behind every bush in the garden, on the sofa in my study, and even in my clothes, my dressing-gowns which he used to wear.'

Eventually he settled down to re-write the *St. Anthony*, which has been already described; he had barely got to work when the great war broke out.

For this period of Flaubert's life the fullest illustration is given by his correspondence with George Sand. He had begun to write to her in 1866, but the letters did not become very frequent till two years later; after the death of Bouilhet this remarkable woman became the recipient of most of Flaubert's outpourings; and his letters, truthfully reflecting, as they always do, the nature of his correspondent, incline one to think very kindly of the author of *Lelia* and *Spiridion*, Mr. Thackeray notwithstanding.

Flaubert was professedly not a politician; nothing was more distasteful to him than the thoughtless chatter, whether inside or outside of legislative assemblies, which passes for politics. He very nearly withdrew from the fortnightly dinner of literary friends at Magny's restaurant, because one evening had been wasted in political conversation; none the less, he unconsciously studied the history of his own time attentively; we have just seen how he wrote a serious contribution to political history under the impression that he was writing a romance. The events of '70 stirred him profoundly. We, who have never known an invasion, may read his letters at this period with sympathy and profit. Unless it is otherwise indicated, the following letters were all written to George Sand:—

'What is becoming of you, my dear master, of you and yours? For my part, I am disheartened, utterly cast down, by the inane stupidity of my fellow-countrymen. The incurable barbarism of humanity fills me with a black melancholy. This enthusiasm,



which has no idea as its motive force, makes me long to die, so as to behold it no longer. Our good Frenchman wants to fight—(1) because he believes himself challenged by Prussia; (2) because the natural state of man is savagery; (3) because war contains in itself that mystic element which transports the masses.

‘Have we got back to the race wars? I fear it. The frightful butchery that is being prepared has not even a pretext. It is the wish to fight for fighting’s sake.

‘I weep over the broken bridges, the ruined tunnels, all this human labour wasted—in a word, such a radical negative.

‘The peace congress is wrong for the moment. Civilisation seems to me a long way off. Hobbes was right: *Homo homini lupus*.

‘I have begun *St. Anthony*, and that would go well enough did I not think of the war—and you!

‘The middle-class man of these parts no longer contains himself. He is of opinion that Prussia was too insolent, and wishes “to revenge himself.” Did you see that a gentleman in the Chamber proposed to pillage the duchy of Baden? Ah, why can I not live with the Bedouins?’

‘*Wednesday, August 3, 1870.*

‘How now, dear master! You too demoralised—sad? What is then to become of the weak?

‘My heart is oppressed in a way which amazes myself, and I wallow in a bottomless melancholy in spite of my work, in spite of the good *St. Anthony*, who should distract me. Is it the consequence of my repeated sorrows? Possibly. But the war counts for much. Meseems we are walking into blackness.

‘Here then we have the natural man. It is all over with the theories now! Cry up progress, the enlightenment, the good sense of the masses, and the gentleness of the French people! I assure you that if one took upon oneself to preach peace here, one would get one’s head broken. Whatever may happen, we have gone back for a long time.

‘Perhaps the wars of races are about to begin again? Before a hundred years are out we shall see several millions of men massacre one another at a sitting. The whole East against the

whole of Europe; the old world against the new! Why not? Great united works like the Suez Canal are perhaps, under another form, only sketches, preparations for those monstrous conflicts of which we have at present no idea!

‘Perhaps, too, Prussia is going to get a smart slap, which was part of the designs of Providence, to re-establish the equilibrium of Europe? That country was tending to hypertrophy, like the France of Louis XIV. and Napoleon. The other organs were discommoded by it. Hence general disturbance. Formidable blood-lettings may possibly be salutary?’

‘Ah, we literary folk! Humanity is far from our ideal! and our immense error, our deadly error, is to think it like us, and to wish to treat it accordingly.’

‘The respect, the fetish-worship, that is given to universal suffrage is more revolting to me than the infallibility of the Pope (which, by the way, has just missed fire finely). Do you think that if France, instead of being governed, in the last resort, by the mass, were in the power of Mandarins, we should be where we are? If, instead of wishing to enlighten the lower classes, trouble had been taken to instruct the higher, you would not have seen M. de Kératry propose the pillage of the duchy of Baden, a measure which the public consider very just!’

‘Do you study Prudhomme at the present epoch? He is gigantic. He admires de Musset’s *Rhine* and asks if de Musset has written anything else. So you see, de Musset has become a national poet, and is putting Beranger’s nose out of joint. What an immense farce everything is! But the reverse of a gay farce.’

‘Distress plainly declares itself. Everybody is in difficulties, myself to begin with. But perhaps we had become over-habituated to the comfortable and tranquil. We were foundering in material things. We must return to the great tradition, cease to cling to life, happiness, money, anything; be what our grandfathers were—light, gaseous personages,’

‘In other times men spent their existence in dying of hunger. The same perspective looms on the horizon. What you tell me about poor Nohant is abominable. The country here has suffered less than with you.’

‘I went to Paris on Monday and came back again on Wednesday. Now I know the Parisian to the very bottom, and in my heart I have excused the most ferocious politics of 1793. Now I understand them. What inanity! What ignorance! What presumption! My fellow-countrymen make me long to be sick. They are fit to be put in the same bag as Isidore (Napoleon III.)!’

‘This people deserves to be chastised, and I fear it may be. . . .’

‘Here we are at the bottom of the abyss! A dishonourable peace will not, perhaps, be accepted. The Prussians wish to destroy Paris! It is their dream.

‘I do not think the siege of Paris is very near. But to force Paris to yield they are going (1) to frighten her by the apparition of cannon; and (2) to ravage the surrounding provinces.

‘At Rouen we are expecting a visit from these gentlemen, and as I am (since Sunday) lieutenant of my company, I drill my men, and go to Rouen to take lessons in the art of war.

‘The deplorable thing is that opinions are divided, some being for resistance to the last, others for peace at any price.

‘I am dying of vexation. What a house mine is! Fourteen persons wailing and dispiriting you. I curse women. It is through them that we perish.

‘I am expecting Paris to have to submit to the fate of Warsaw, and you vex me with your enthusiasm for the Republic. At the moment at which we are conquered by the most absolute positivism, how can you still believe in phantoms? Whatever happens, the people, who are now in power, will be sacrificed, and the Republic will follow their fate. Observe that I defend this poor creature of a Republic, but I don’t believe in it. . . .

‘. . . This is the point to which we have been brought by the mania for refusing to see the truth! By the love of sham and humbug. We are going to become a Poland, then a Spain. Then it will be Prussia’s turn, who will be eaten up by Russia.

‘As for myself, I consider myself a man done for. My brain will not recover itself. One cannot write when one has lost one’s self-esteem. I only ask for one thing, that is, to die and be quiet.’

Extract from a letter to Edmond de Goncourt.

‘I have engaged myself as attendant at the hospital at Rouen, till I go to defend Lutetia, if siege is laid to her (which I don’t believe). I feel a longing, a prurient desire to fight. Is it the re-appearance of the blood of my ancestors, the Natchez? No, it is the explosion of the beastliness of existence. Happy are those, whom we regret, my poor friend!’

Writing to Claudius Popelin, he says:—

‘Others are not like myself. Some even support our misfortunes saucily enough. There are ready-made phrases, which console the masses for everything: *France will raise herself again! why despair? It is a wholesome chastening!* etc. Oh this eternal humbug!’

On the 29th of September 1870, in a letter to Maxime Ducamp, occurs the following passage:—

‘After bordering on, “grazing” madness or suicide, I am now completely recovered. I have bought a haversack, and am ready for anything. I assure you this all begins to be very fine. This evening there arrived at Croisset four hundred *mobiles* coming to us from the Pyrenees. I have two in my house, not counting two at Paris; my mother has two at Rouen, Commanville five at Paris, and two at Dieppe. I spent my time in drilling and night-patrol. Since last Sunday I have started work again, and am no longer sad. In the middle of all this there are, or rather have been, scenes of an exquisite grotesqueness; humanity is shown bare at such times. What afflicts me is the prodigious inanity with which we shall be overwhelmed afterwards.

‘All “gentleness,” as Montaigne would have said, is lost for a long while, a new world will begin; children will be brought up in the hatred of Prussia! Militaryism, the most abject positivism, will be our lot henceforth!—unless, the ‘powder purifying the air, we come out of it all stronger and sounder, I think we shall shortly be avenged by a general upheaval. When Prussia has the ports of Holland, Courland, and Trieste, England, Austria, and Russia, will have time to repent.



William was wrong not to make peace after Sedan; our disgrace would have been irredeemable; now we are beginning to become objects of interest. As for our immediate success, who knows? The Prussian army is a marvellous machine in its precision, but all machines get out of gear unexpectedly; a slip may break a spring. Our enemy has science on her side; but sentiment, inspiration, despair are forces to be reckoned with. Victory should remain with the right, and now we are in the right. Yes, you speak truly; we are paying for the long lie in which we have lived, for everything was sham; sham army, sham politics, sham literature, sham credit, and even sham whores. To say the truth, it was an immoral existence. Persigny reproached me all last winter with "wanting ideal"! And perhaps he was in earnest. We are going to make some fine discoveries; it will be a pretty story to write! Ah! how humbled I am at having become a savage, for my heart is as dry as a stone! Whereupon I am going to re-don my costume, and go and make a little military excursion in the forest of Canteleu. Do you think of the number of poor that we must have? All the manufactories are shut, and the workmen have neither work nor bread; it will be fine this winter! In spite of all that,—I may be mad,—something tells me that we shall come out of it all.'

TO GEORGE SAND.

'... Explain this to me! The idea of making peace exasperates me now, and I would prefer to have Paris burnt like Moscow rather than see the Prussians enter. But we are not at that point yet; I think the wind is turning.

'I have read some soldiers' letters which are models. A country in which such things are written is not swallowed up. France is a jade with stay in her, and will get up again.'

*Tuesday, October 11th, 1870.*

'What distress! I had at my door to-day two hundred and seventy-one poor people, and all were relieved! What will it be in the winter!

'The Prussians are now within twelve hours of Rouen, and we have no orders, no command, no discipline, nothing, nothing! We are always put off with the army of the Loire. Where is it?

Do you know anything of it? What is happening in the centre of France? . . .

‘I do not believe that a sadder man than myself exists in France! (Everything depends upon the degree of sensitiveness.) I am dying of vexation. That is the truth, and consolation irritates me. What knocks me down is (1) human ferocity, (2) the conviction that we are entering upon an era of stupidity. We shall be utilitarian, military, American, and Catholic—very Catholic! you will see. The Prussian war ends, and destroys the French Revolution. . . .

‘. . . What a collapse! What a fall! what distress! What abomination! Can one believe in progress and civilisation in the presence of all that is happening?

‘What, pray, is the use of science, since this people, full of scientific men, commits abominations worthy of the Huns; and worse than theirs, for they are systematic, cold, designed, and are not excused either by passion or hunger!

‘Why do they hate us so? Do not you feel crushed by the hatred of forty millions of men? That immense, infernal gulf makes me giddy.’ . . .

TO MADAME REGNIER.

‘DIEPPE, *March 11th*, 1871.

‘. . . I was like Rachel, I “would not be comforted,” and I spent my nights seated on my bed, rattling like one about to die. I am angry with my time for having given me the sentiments of a twelfth-century brute. What barbarism! What retrogression! And yet I was scarcely a progressive and humanitarian! Never mind, I had my illusions! And I did not expect to see the coming of the *end of the world*. For that is where we are; we are looking on at the end of the Latin world. Farewell then to all that we love! Paganism, Christianity, Smuggery. Those are the three great evolutions of humanity. It is not pleasant to find one’s self in the last. Ah—we are to see fine times! *My bile suffocates me*. That is the upshot of it.” . . .

There is no exaggeration in this; when Flaubert gave way at this time to his wrathful feelings he repeatedly became literally, physically sick.

But the worst had not come yet ; the Prussian occupation was followed by the Commune.

NEUVILLE, *near DIEPPE, March 31, 1871.*

‘Is it the end of humbug? Will one be done with hollow metaphysics and accepted opinions? The whole mischief comes from our gigantic ignorance. What should be *studied*, is believed without discussion. Instead of looking, people affirm.

‘The French Revolution must cease to be a dogma ; it must be brought under the kingdom of science like everything else human. If people had been more scientific they would not have believed that a mystical formula is capable of making armies, and that the word “Republic” is enough to conquer a million of disciplined men. Badinguet should have been left on the throne expressly to make peace, with full liberty to send him to the galleys afterwards. If people had been more learned they would have known what the volunteers of ’92 were, and the retreat of Brunswick purchased, money down, by Danton and Westermann. But no! Always the old string! Always humbug! Now we have the Paris Commune, which is returning to pure Middle Ages! That is neat! The question of rents in particular is splendid. The government now interferes with natural right; it meddles with contracts between individuals. The Commune declares that one does not owe one’s debts, and that one service is not paid for by another service. It is gigantic in silliness and injustice.

‘Many Conservatives who wanted to preserve the Republic through love of order, are by way of regretting Badinguet, and in their hearts call for the Prussians. The good folk of the Hôtel de Ville have displaced our hatreds. That is the grudge I owe them. It seems to me we have never been lower.

‘We are tossed about between the Society of St Vincent de Paul and the International. But this latter commits too many follies to have a long life. I admit that it may beat the troops from Versailles, and upset the Government; the Prussians will come into Paris, and “order will reign at Warsaw.” If, on the contrary, it is beaten, the reaction will be furious, and all liberty stifled.

‘What are we to say of the Socialists, who imitate the proceedings of Badinguet and William ; requisitions, suppressions of papers, capital executions without trial, etc. ? Ah, what an immoral beast the people is ! And how humiliating to be human !

‘Why no letters ? You have, then, not received mine sent from Dieppe ? Are you ill ? Are you still alive ? What does that mean ? I certainly hope that neither you (nor any of yours) are at Paris, capital of the arts, hearth of civilisation, centre of good manners and politeness.

‘Do you know the worst of all that ? It is *that one gets used to it*. Yes ! One puts up with it. One gets accustomed to doing without Paris, to thinking no more about it, and almost to believing that it is no longer in existence.

‘For my own part, I am not like the middle-class ; I think that there is no misfortune left after the invasion. The Prussian war has affected me like a great upheaval of nature, one of those cataclysms such as happen every six thousand years : while the insurrection of Paris is in my eyes a very clear, almost a simple thing. . . .

‘I reply at once to your questions on what concerns me personally. No ! The Prussians have not sacked my habitation. They have *prigged* some little articles of no importance, a small dressing-case, a handbox, some pipes ; but in the main they have done no harm. As for my study, it has been respected. I had buried a great box full of letters, and put my voluminous notes on St. Anthony in a safe place. All that I found untouched.

‘The worst of the invasion for me is that it has aged my poor good old mother by ten years. What a change ! She can no longer walk alone, and her feebleness is pitiable. How sad it is to see the beings one loves gradually deteriorate ! . . .

‘. . . As for the Commune, which is on the way to expire, it is the last manifestation of the Middle Ages. The very last, let us hope !

‘I hate democracy (such at least as it is understood in France), that is to say, the exaltation of mercy to the detriment of justice, the negation of right ; in one word, the opposite of society.



‘The Commune rehabilitates assassins, as Jesus pardoned thieves, and wealthy houses are pillaged, because people have learned to curse Dives (*Lazarus in the original*), who was not a bad rich man, but simply a rich man. “The Republic is above all discussion” is worth as much as the other faith, “The Pope is infallible !” Always formulas, always gods !

‘The last god but one, who was universal suffrage, has just played a terrible prank upon his worshippers in naming “the assassins of Versailles.” Then in what must one believe ? In nothing ! That is the beginning of wisdom. It was time to rid oneself of “principles,” and to enter upon science, upon inquiry. The only reasonable thing (I always come back to this) is a government of Mandarins, provided that the Mandarins know something, and even that they know many things. The people is an eternal infant, and it will always be in the last rank in the hierarchy of social elements, because it is the number, the mass, the unlimited. It matters little whether many peasants know how to read, and don’t listen to their parson, but it is infinitely important that men like Renan or Littré should be able to live and be listened to. Our only salvation now is in a legitimate aristocracy ; I mean by that a majority which will be composed of something more than mere figures.

‘If people had been more enlightened, if there had been in Paris more people knowing history, we should not have put up with Gambetta, nor Prussia, nor the Commune. What did the Catholics do to meet a great danger ? They crossed themselves, recommending themselves to God and the Saints.

‘We, who are advanced, we go and cry, “Hurrah for the Republic !” calling up the remembrance of 1792 ; and there was no doubt about the success ; mark that ! The Prussian no longer existed.

‘We embraced one another for joy, and kept hold of one another, so as not to go and run to the defiles of the Argonne, where there are no longer defiles ; never mind, that is tradition ! I have a friend at Rouen, who proposed at a club the manufacture of *pikes* to encounter *chassepots* !

‘Ah, how much more practical it would have been to keep Badinguet, and send him to the galleys as soon as peace was

made! Austria did not go into revolution after Sadowa, nor Italy after Novara, nor Russia after Sebastopol! But our good Frenchmen hasten to pull down their house as soon as the chimney takes fire. . . .’

‘CROISSET, *June 10th*, 1871.

‘Never have I had a greater longing, a greater need, to see you than now. I come from Paris, and I do not know whom to speak to. I am suffocated. I am quite knocked up, or rather out of heart.

‘The odour of corpses disgusts me less than the miasma of egotism breathing from all mouths. The sight of the ruins is nothing in comparison with the immense Parisian inanity. With very rare exceptions, everybody seemed to me only fit for the strait-waistcoat.

‘One half of the population longs to hang the other half, which returns the compliment. That is clearly to be read in the eyes of the passers-by.

‘And the Prussians no longer exist! They are excused and admired. The “men of reason” wish to get themselves naturalised as Germans. I assure you, it is enough to make one despair of the human race. . . .’

‘What say you of my friend Maury, who kept the tricolor flying on the *Archives* the whole time of the Commune? I think few people are capable of such a bit of pluck. . . .’

‘Did you notice among the documents found at the Tuileries last September a plot of a romance by Isidore? What a scenario!’

‘*September 6*, 1871.

‘. . . But what beats everything now is the Conservative party, which does not even go to vote, and which does not cease to tremble. You can’t imagine the funk of the Parisians. “In six months, sir, the Commune will be established everywhere,” is the universal answer, or rather wail.

‘I do not believe in a near cataclysm, because nothing that has been foreseen happens. The International will perhaps end by triumphing, but not as it hopes, not as is feared. Ah! how tired I am of the base working-man, the inept middle-class man, the stupid peasant, and the odious ecclesiastic!

‘That is why, as far as I can, I lose myself in antiquity. At

the present moment I am making all the gods talk in their dying struggle. The second title of my book might be "*The ne plus ultra* of insanity." And the typography vanishes further and further in my mind. Why publish? Who now cares about art? I make literature for my own satisfaction, like a middle-class man turning table-rings in a barn. You will tell me that it would be better to be useful. But how? How get a hearing? . . .'

' September 8, 1871.

' . . . The idea of equality, which is all the modern democracy, is an essentially Christian idea, and opposed to that of justice. See how pardon now predominates! Sentiment is everything, right nothing. People are even ceasing to be indignant against the murderers, and the folk who set fire to Paris are less punished than the libeller of M. Favre. . . .

' . . . As to the good people, "free and compulsory education" will finish it. When everybody is able to read the *Petit Journal* and *Figaro* they will not read anything else; for the middle-class man, the gentleman of property, reads nothing more. The press is a school of ignorance, because it relieves from thought. Say that, you will be fine; and if you win conviction, you will have done a proud service.

' The first remedy would be to be done with universal suffrage, the disgrace of the human intellect. As it is constituted, one single element prevails to the detriment of all others; number domineers over intellect, education, race, and even money, which is worth more than number.

' But a society (which always has need of a kind God, of a Saviour) is perhaps incapable of defending itself. The Conservative party has not even the instinct of the brute (for the brute at least knows how to fight for its lair and its victuals). It will be divided by the Internationals, the Jesuits of the future. But those of the past, who too had neither country nor justice, did not succeed, and the International will founder because it is on the wrong tack,—no ideas, nothing but concupiscence!

' Ah, dear good master, if you could only hate! That is what you are wanting in—hatred! In spite of your great sphinx eyes, you have seen the world through gold colour. It came

from the sun of your heart ; but so many dark shadows have risen, that now you no longer recognise things. Come then, cry, thunder ! Take your grand lyre and twang the brazen cord : the monsters will flee. Water us with the drops of the blood of outraged Justice.

‘ Why do you feel “ the great ties broken ” ? What is broken ? Your ties are indestructible, your sympathy cannot go beyond the eternal.

‘ Our ignorance of history makes us calumniate our own time. We have always been like this. Some calm years have deceived us. That is all. I too believed in the softening of manners. We must erase this error and esteem ourselves no more than people esteemed themselves in the time of Pericles or Shakespeare, atrocious epochs in which fine things were done. Tell me that you lift your head, and that you think of your old troubadour, who loves you.

‘ . . . The mass, the number, is always idiotic. I have not many convictions, but I hold to that strongly. However, the mass must be respected, silly though it be, because it contains the germs of an incalculable fecundity. *Give it liberty but not power.*

‘ I do not believe any more than you do in class distinctions. Castes belong to archæology. But I believe that the poor hate the rich, and that the rich are afraid of the poor. That will be so eternally. It is useless to preach love to the one or the other. The most pressing task is to instruct the rich, who, in the end, are the stronger. Enlighten the middle-class man to begin with, for he knows nothing, absolutely nothing. The whole dream of democracy is to raise the proletarian to the level of the inanity of the middle-class man. The dream is partly accomplished. He reads the same papers, and has the same pastimes. . . .

‘ . . . The romantics will have fine accounts to show with their immoral sentimentality. Do you remember a piece of Victor Hugo’s, the *Légende des Siècles*, where a sultan is saved because he took pity on a pig ; it is always the story of the penitent thief, blessed because he repented. It is good to repent, but, better still, to do no wrong. . . .

‘ . . . That will not change so long as universal suffrage re-



mains what it is. Every man, in my opinion, however low he may be, has a right to one voice, his own, but is not the equal of his neighbour, who may be worth a hundred times as much. In an industrial concern (limited liability company) each shareholder votes according to the value of his contribution. So should it be in the government of a nation. I am quite worth twenty electors of Croisset. Money, intellect, and even birth, ought to be counted—in short, all the forces. Now, up to the present, I only see one, number. Ah! dear master, you who have so much influence, you ought to bell the cat. . . .’

TO MADAME ROGER DES GENETTES.

‘. . . I pledge you to read Renan’s last book; it is very good, that is to say, I agree with it. Have you read the letters of Madame Sand in the *Temps*? The friend to whom they are addressed is myself, for we have had a political correspondence this summer. What I said to her is partly to be found in Renan’s book. . . .’

On the 6th of April 1872 Flaubert’s mother died. Ten days afterwards he wrote a short letter to George Sand, concluding with these touching words:—

‘I have perceived during the last fortnight that my poor good old mother was the being I loved best. It is as if part of my very bowels had been torn from me.’ It was to her quite as much as to literature that he had given his life; for, as he had written to George Sand shortly before: ‘Literature is not the thing I love most in the world. I explained myself badly in my last letter. I was speaking to you of distractions and of nothing else. I am not such a pedant as to prefer phrases to beings,’ and yet this same mother had complained that ‘the love of phrases had dried up his heart.’

## CHAPTER XVIII

### THE THREE SHORT STORIES—ST. JULIAN THE HOSPITABLE

THE remaining eight years of Flaubert's life were spent in ever-increasing devotion to literary pursuits. One by one the friends who had understood him, who had enjoyed his turbulence, shared his enthusiasms, died off, and the void around him made him live more and more inside himself. Théophile Gauthier died early in the autumn of 1872, George Sand in June 1876; and though neither of these had ever belonged to the inmost circle of Flaubert's friends, their loss, especially the loss of the latter, was irreparable. George Sand's sedative nature exerted a healthy influence upon 'her old troubadour'; she made him to some extent ashamed of his intellectual and nervous irritability; her sympathy did not, as is too often the case, stimulate the morbid inclinations of her friend.

The cold reception of Bouilhet's posthumous poems, of his last play, 'Mademoiselle Aïssé'; the rejection by the theatrical managers of a comedy unfinished by him, which Flaubert worked up, left our poor giant smarting and raw. His declamations against the 'inanity' of his compatriots, and their 'hatred' of literature, became from this period savage. He never forgave Lévy for not pushing the sale of Bouilhet's *Dernières Chansons*. It was through his friend, not through himself, that the public indifference wounded him, and to this we owe his 'revenge,' *Bouvard et Pécuchet*.

In spite of the sadness of his letters, and their occasional

ferocity, Flaubert was still outwardly the impetuous, eager liver of old. His irritability never degenerated into mere bad temper, and those who had to live intimately with him during the last five years of his life dwelt on his '*tenderness*' as the one distinguishing feature of his character.

In 1875 M. Commanville lost all his property owing to an unfortunate turn in his business ; his wife, Flaubert's niece, the Liline of his letters, though possessed of property of her own, was not able, owing to the laws regulating doweries in Normandy, to advance her capital to her husband, and Flaubert spontaneously handed over all his own capital to the Commanvilles. Madame Roger des Genettes says of him, 'He gave up £48,000 as one gives a thousand crowns.' In return for this he was to live at Croisset, and be allowed an annual income. From this time his niece lived with him at Croisset, or close to him in Paris ; she sat in his study, and became, as Bouilhet had been, the first recipient of the newly-hatched phrases, the audience upon whom everything was tested. Thus his domestic life was not absolutely devoid of alleviations. Further, he found in the Russian Tourgenieff a calm and brotherly friend, whose gentleness of manner was no less pleasing to Flaubert than his accurate scholarship and penetrating judgment. Alphonse Daudet and Zola became literary, if not intimate, friends, and then there was the young Guy de Maupassant, nephew to Alfred le Poittevin, who stirred in Flaubert something of the same feeling which had formerly been roused by Alfred le Poittevin himself and Louis Bouilhet.

To understand Flaubert it is necessary to know his friendships ; he lived in them and in his literature ; that was the man's whole existence outside of his family ; how he respected those claims we have seen. After the death of Louis Bouilhet Flaubert resumed more intimate relations with Ducamp ;

everything that was associated with his youth became sacred to him as time went on, and though Ducamp evidently continued to be in many ways irritating to him, the two men, the sole survivors of their generation, felt a need of one another.

The literary work of these last years was first the long-deferred *St. Anthony*, which after an incubation of thirty-five years was at last reduced to a form in which it could be published; the first part of *Bouvard et Pécuchet*, a work which Flaubert regarded as the complement of the *St. Anthony*, the *Trois Contes*, which were written by a sudden inspiration in 1876, though one of them had been for many years in a state of gestation in Flaubert's mind; and a comedy, 'The Candidate,' which was produced at the Vaudeville early in 1874, and proved 'a frost,' though it is excellent reading. The characters are too impersonal for dramatic effect, and do not readily lend themselves to the art of the actor, which is another thing from the art of the writer.

The three stories are the epitome of Flaubert's literary work; they are not printed in the order in which they were written, which is somewhat unfortunate, as in that one year, 1876, Flaubert travelled over the same literary path that his mind had followed in the course of his whole life. The first work he planned was, as we have seen, the *St. Anthony*; *St. Julien l'Hospitalier*, which was the first written of the three stories, belongs to the epoch of lyricism; it is a prose chant, reproducing the religious atmosphere of the early Middle Ages; in it Flaubert makes for once happy use of his love for sounding names, and his intimate acquaintance with strange beasts and legendary monsters.

As the excessively poetical and fantastic *St. Anthony* was succeeded by *Madame Bovary*, that pitiless analysis of commonplace middle-class relations, so the *Story of a Simple*



*Soul* followed *St. Julien* ; it is the life of a good, faithful, narrow-minded servant-girl, who, from the beginning to the end of her life, lives for and is disregarded by others. Strokes of savage satire abound in this short story, and perhaps unduly divert the attention from the pathetic tragedy which is the main subject.

Then, as if to recompense himself for the self-repression of the *Simple Soul*, Flaubert sought his next subject in the East, just as *Salammbô* followed *Madame Bovary*, and wrote the story of *Herodias*, a short masterpiece, in which for once he did not allow his archæology or his love of the grotesque to run away with him. H

It is much to be regretted that Flaubert did not discover the short prose story earlier in life ; for it is the form best suited to his peculiar powers. It represses automatically his worst fault, his tendency to be drawn away from his main subject by side issues, and to overload his plot with details interesting and amusing in themselves, but not necessary to the development of the subject, or illustrative of it by contrast ; it demands accuracy and refinement of workmanship, exactly suiting the cadenced prose of which Flaubert was enamoured ; while its special weakness, its tendency to encourage the appeal to the emotions rather than to the intellect, was the one literary pitfall into which Flaubert was physically incapable of straying.

Of the three stories perhaps the *St. Julien* is the most characteristic, and a more detailed description of it will be profitable to the reader who wishes to know wherein lay the power which differentiates Flaubert from other powerful writers.

There are at least three mediæval saints whose lives and conversions are connected with the chase : St. Hubert, St. Eustace, and St. Julian. When our noble forefathers were

not at war, they were hunting. The modern game-laws are directly descended from those stringent mediæval regulations, which forbade to the common man the chase of certain animals: from those forest-laws, whose severity made the death of William Rufus seem to his contemporaries a judgment from heaven. A converted sportsman was as attractive to the mediæval mind as the converted thief and drunkard to the revivalists and Salvation Army of to-day. St. Hubert and St. Eustace were both mighty hunters, who owed their salvation to the apparition of a stag bearing a golden crucifix between his horns. The conversion of St. Julian was effected in another way; this is how it happened.

Julian was the son of noble and devout parents, in whose well-fortified castle he was brought up. Soon after his birth his mother had a vision, in which an aged hermit announced to her that her son would be a saint; at the same time a mendicant mysteriously muttered to his father: 'Thy son—much blood!—much glory!—always fortunate, an emperor's family.' The boy was educated in accordance with the prospect of the double destiny; his mother provided him with monks to instruct him in religion, his father with men-at-arms and huntsmen.

'One day during mass, on lifting his head he perceived a little white mouse coming out of a hole in the wall. It tripped upon the first step of the altar, and after two or three turns to the right and left ran away on the same side. The Sunday following he was disturbed by the idea that he might see it again. It came back; and every Sunday he awaited it, was annoyed by it, was filled with hatred and resolved to do away with it.

'Then having closed the door and scattered some crumbs of a cake on the steps, he posted himself before the hole with a wand in his hand.

'After a very long time the pink nose appeared, then the whole mouse. He struck a light blow, and stood astounded

before this little body which had ceased to move. A drop of blood stained the flags. He quickly wiped it away with his sleeve, threw the mouse outside, and told nobody.'

From this time onward Julian was possessed with a rage for killing. His father gave him a pack of hounds; all the instruments of mediæval sport; but Julian preferred to hunt by himself with his horse and his hawk, or his dogs. He spent long days in the chase, and 'came back in the middle of the night covered with gore and mud, with thorns in his hair, and with the odour of wild beasts upon him. He became like them. When his mother kissed him he would accept her embrace coldly, seeming to dream of deep things.'

One day, having wandered far from home into a wild country, he entered an avenue of great trees like a triumphal arch at the entrance of a forest; animals of all kinds swarmed around him, and he slew them all; at last, crowded in a narrow alley, he discovered an immense herd of deer; they all fell before the bolts of his cross-bow. Night came on.

'Julian leaned against a tree. He contemplated with wide eyes the enormity of the massacre, not understanding how he had been able to slay so much.

'On the other side of the valley, on the edge of the forest, he perceived a stag, a hind, and her fawn.

'The stag, which was black and huge in size, carried sixteen points and had a white beard. The hind, golden as dead leaves, cropped the grass; and the spotted fawn, without hindering her course, tugged at her teats.

'The cross-bow twanged once more. The fawn was killed at once. Then its mother, looking to heaven, cried with a deep, rending human voice. Julian, furious, stretched her on the ground with a shot full in the breast.

'The great stag had seen, bounded. Julian despatched his

last arrow at him. It hit him in the forehead, and stayed there.

‘The great stag seemed not to feel it ; striding over the dead he kept advancing, was going to rush upon him, tear him ; and Julian retreated in an inexpressible terror. The monstrous animal stopped, and with flaming eyes, reverend as a patriarch, and like a judge, three times repeated, while there sounded the toll of a distant bell : “ Accursed ! Accursed ! Accursed ! One day, savage heart, thou shalt slay thy father and thy mother ! ” He bent his knees, gently closed his eyelids, and died.’

Horror seized Julian ; he made his way home possessed with apprehension and dread ; two accidents which seemed likely to bring about the fulfilment of the prophecy so alarmed him that he fled from home.

Julian joined a troop of soldiers of fortune ; soon he became their leader ; his fame spread through the world, he gathered together an army.

‘Turn by turn he aided the Dauphin of France, and the King of England, the Templars of Jerusalem, the Surena of the Parthians, the Negus of Abyssinia, and the Emperor of Calicut. He fought Scandinavians covered with fish-scales, negroes with targets of hippopotamus leather, and mounted on red asses, Indians coloured like gold, and brandishing over their diadems broad sabres brighter than mirrors. He conquered the Troglodytes and the Anthropophagi. He crossed countries so scorching that the hair took fire of itself under the burning sun, like a torch ; and others which were so dry that the arms dropping from the body fell to the ground ; and lands where there was so much mist that one walked surrounded by phantoms.’

Eventually he rendered such a service to the Emperor of Occitania that he gave him his daughter in marriage.

Julian forswore the chase as being likely to bring down the curse, though his dreams were haunted by strange animals, and he became so melancholy that his wife inquired and learned the reason of his sorrows. She encouraged him



to resume his old amusement; his parents must by this time be dead.

One night Julian was disturbed in his prayers by the barking of a fox under the window; he heard light steps; he looked out and seemed to see the forms of animals in the dusk.

The temptation was too strong; he took down his quiver from the peg and went out.

He had scarcely gone before an old man and an old woman arrived at the castle bent with years and fatigue; they were his father and mother, who had been seeking their son for years through the world. The Princess accepted their proofs, waited on them, laid them to sleep in her own bed.

Meanwhile Julian had wandered far; the beasts which had disturbed him were gone; he entered a forest; then a plain; then sandhills; and at last he came to a high table-land, which was a place of tombs. Hyænas came round him, and then fled from him. In a ravine he found a bull; his spear broke upon it, as though the animal had been of bronze. Filled with shame he re-entered the forest; it was full of the eyes of animals, which watched him; he shot at them in vain; became furious with rage, turned homewards; then all the beasts formed a circle round him; he pressed forward; they made way, then followed him; crowded on his footsteps; they seemed to ridicule him, to be certain of some vengeance.

At last the cock crew; day broke; and he recognised the roof of the palace above the orange-trees.

‘Then at the edge of a field he saw, only three steps off, some red-legged partridges fluttering in the stubble. He unclasped his mantle, flung it over them like a net; when he uncovered them he found only one; and it had been long dead, rotten.

‘This deception exasperated him more than all the others.

His thirst for carnage came upon him again ; beasts failing him, he would have liked to massacre men.'

Returning to his palace, and entering his own chamber, he saw two forms on the bed ; one was a bearded man ; filled with a furious jealousy, he slew both. The curse was accomplished.

The next day Julian fled from the palace after exhorting his wife to pray for his soul.

He begged his way over the world ; when he told his story all fled from him ; even the animals avoided him.

'He sought the solitudes. But the wind brought to his ear sounds like the death-rattle ; the dew tears dropping on the ground reminded him of other drops of heavier weight. The sun every evening spread blood upon the clouds ; and every night his crime was renewed in his dreams.'

At last he came to a river where there was a ford so dangerous that for a long while no one had dared to cross. An old boat lay half-buried in the mud among the reeds. Julian discovered a pair of oars in it, and the idea occurred to him to spend his existence in the service of others.

He built with his hands two piers on either strand, repaired the boat, and made himself a little hut on the shore with dried mud and stems of trees.

Thus he lived for long, tortured by the heat of the day, by the cold of the night, by the bites of poisonous insects, living on the alms grudged by those whom he ferried over the water.

'One night, when he was sleeping, he thought he heard some one call. He listened and could only hear the roaring of the waves.

'But the same voice repeated "Julian." It came from the other side, which, considering the breadth of the river, seemed to him marvellous.

'A third time there was a call, "Julian." And this deep voice had the tone of a minster bell.

'Having lighted his lantern he went out of the hut. A

furious hurricane filled the night. The darkness was deep, here and there rent by the whiteness of leaping waves.

‘After a moment’s hesitation Julian untied the rope. Immediately the water became calm, the craft glided over it and touched the other bank, where a man was waiting.

‘He was wrapped in a ragged cloth, his face like a plaster mask, and his eyes redder than coals of fire. On placing the lantern near him Julian perceived that he was covered with a hideous leprosy ; still there was in his attitude as it were a king’s majesty.

‘As soon as he entered the boat, it sank prodigiously, crushed beneath his weight ; it rose with a jerk, and Julian began to row.

‘At each stroke of the oar the surging waves lifted it in front. The water, blacker than ink, coursed furiously past the gunwales, it sank into bottomless hollows, lifted itself into mountains ; and the shallop leapt over them, then plunged into depths, where it revolved, the sport of the winds.

‘Julian flung himself forward, straightened his arms, and making a buttress of his legs and feet, thrust himself back with a convulsive motion of the body to increase his strength. The hail lashed his hands, the rain poured down his back, the force of the wind strangled him ; he stopped. Then the boat drifted away down stream. But understanding that he had to do with something out of the ordinary, with an order which he could not fail to obey, he took up the oars again ; and the regular beat of the rowlocks broke the howling of the storm.

‘The little lantern burned in front of him. Birds fluttering past hid it from time to time. But he never ceased to see the eyeballs of the leper who stood in the stern, immoveable as a column. That lasted a long while, a very long while !

‘When they had reached the hut Julian closed the door, and he saw him seated on the stool. The kind of shroud that covered him had fallen to his hips ; and his shoulders, his chest, his thin arms were barely to be seen under folds of scaly pustules. Enormous wrinkles furrowed his forehead. He had a hole in the place of his nose, like a skeleton ; and his blue lips gave forth a putrid breath, thick like a mist.

“ I am hungry ! ” he said.

‘ Julian gave him what he possessed—an old scrap of bacon, and the crusts of a black loaf.

‘ When he had devoured them, the table, the dish, and the handle of the knife had the same patches that were to be seen on his body.

‘ Then he said, “ I am thirsty ! ”

‘ Julian went to fetch his pitcher ; and as he took it there came a scent from it which opened his heart and his nostrils. It was wine ; what a windfall ! But the leper stretched out his arm, and at one gulp emptied the jug.

‘ Then he said, “ I am cold ! ”

‘ Julian lit a bundle of brushwood in the middle of the cabin with his taper.

‘ The leper came to warm himself by it ; and squatting on his heels, he trembled in all his limbs, sank ; his eyes no longer burned, his sores flowed, and in an almost inaudible voice he murmured, “ Thy bed ! ”

‘ Julian gently helped him to drag himself to it, and, to cover him, even stretched the sail of his boat over him.

‘ The leper moaned. In the corners of his mouth his teeth gleamed, a rapid rattle shook his chest, and at each breath his belly sank to his back-bone.

‘ Then he closed his eyes.

‘ “ I have, as it were, ice in my veins ! Come and lie by me ! ”

‘ And Julian, drawing back the sail, lay close to him on the dead leaves, side by side.

‘ The leper turned his head.

‘ “ Take off thy garments, that I may enjoy the warmth of thy body ! ”

‘ Julian took off his clothing ; then, naked as on the day of his birth, he took his place again in the bed, and he felt the skin of the leper against his thigh colder than a serpent, and rougher than a file.

‘ He tried to comfort him, and the other replied, gasping :

‘ “ Alas, I am going to die ! Come near me, warm me ! Not with thy hands ! But with thy whole body.”

‘ Julian stretched himself entirely over him, mouth to mouth, breast to breast.



‘Then the leper strained him to his heart ; and his eyes suddenly took the brightness of stars ; his hair spread out like the rays of the sun ; the breath of his nostrils became as the sweetness of roses ; a cloud of incense floated up from the hearth ; the waves began to sing. A hugeness of delight, a joy more than human, descended like a flood into the soul of Julian in his ecstasy ; and he, whose arms enfolded him, was growing, growing, touching the one wall of the cabin with his head, with his feet the other. The roof was lifted off, the firmament unfolded : and Julian rose into the blue depths, face to face with our Lord Jesus Christ, who was carrying him to heaven.

‘That is the story of St. Julian the Hospitable, such nearly as it is to be found on a stained-glass window in my own country.’

As the *St. Anthony* was suggested by Breughel’s picture at Genoa, so a window in the cathedral at Rouen was the germ of this legend ; which is written with the fullest realisation of the mental condition of the Middle Ages, when the map of the world was not, and fabulous monsters and equally fabulous monarchs were the food of the everyday imagination. Once or twice the irrepressible satirical tendency asserts itself, but not so as to jar, and for once Flaubert’s prodigious learning is skilfully used, skilfully, because it is necessary to reproduce the mediæval atmosphere ; and though Maxime Ducamp derides Flaubert for having read all the ancient books of venery in order to write a page or two of this story, the labour was not wasted. The tale would have sold as well, would possibly have been read more, had its author been content to be superficial ; but then it would not have shown, as it assuredly does show, ‘the lion’s claw.’

## CHAPTER XIX

### LETTERS TO GEORGE SAND—HER DEATH

DURING these last eight years there are many bright passages in the letters, and many suggestive passages in spite of the prevailing tone of melancholy or irritation. Flaubert tells George Sand, on the 12th of July 1872, 'I have just read Dickens's *Pickwick*. Do you know it? There are superb passages in it; but what a defective composition! All the English writers have this fault, except Walter Scott; they want *plan*. That is unendurable to us Latins.' We may be prepared to pocket our national pride and accept the indictment, but what an exception!—Walter Scott, who began *Guy Mannering* with one intention and ended it in another sense, without taking the trouble to change the beginning; who incorporated in his later novels stories heard over the wine the evening before!

It was at this time that Flaubert began to write to George Sand under the name of the Père Cruchard (Juggins again), Director of the Ladies of Disillusion.

There are some striking passages in a letter written in October 1872 to George Sand on the occasion of the death of Théophile Gautier:—

'... Although foreseen, the death of poor Théo has overwhelmed me. He is the last of my intimate friends to depart. He closes the list. Whom shall I see now when I go to Paris?

with whom talk of what interests me? I know some thinkers, at least people who are styled such, but an artist! Where is there one?

‘I tell you that he died of the modern “carriage.” That was his own phrase; and he repeated it a thousand times to me this winter: “I am dying of the commune.”’

‘The fourth of September inaugurated an order of things in which people such as he have no longer any place in the world. One must not ask orange-trees for apples. The artists in luxury are superfluous in a society in which the people is dominant.

‘How I regret him! He and Bouilhet are absolutely wanting to me, and nothing can replace them. He was so good too, and whatever people may say, so simple. Later on it will be recognised, if people ever come back to concern themselves with literature, that he was a great poet. Meanwhile he is a totally unknown author. So is Pierre Corneille.

‘He had two hatreds: the hatred of shopkeepers in his youth, that gave him talent; the hatred of the cad in his mature age, that last killed him. He died of suppressed fury, of wrath at not being able to say what he thought. He was swept down by Girardin, Fould, Dalloz, and by the first Republic (1848). I tell you that because *I have seen* abominable things, and because I am perhaps the only man to whom he imparted his confidences in full. He was wanting in what is the most important thing in life for one’s self and for others, *character*. To have missed the Academy was to him a terrible grief. What feebleness! How little he must have thought of himself! The quest of any honour whatever seems to me, moreover, an act of incomprehensible modesty.’

Théophile Gauthier was a poor man, and had to support a large family as best he could by journalism; he did not always find it easy to accommodate himself to the taste of his editors. His private life was irreproachable, but it is difficult to forgive him such work as *Mademoiselle de Maupin*.

George Sand at this time frequently urged Flaubert to marry; his answer was generally to the same effect:—

‘As for living with a wife, marrying, as you advise me, the prospect seems to me fantastic. Why? I am sure I don’t know. But that is how it is. Explain the problem. The feminine has never been dove-tailed into my existence; and then I am not rich enough, and then, and then . . . I am too old . . . and then too decent to inflict my person on another to all eternity. There is an ecclesiastical basis in me which is not recognised.’

Two years later he writes:—

‘What you say to me of your dear little ones has moved me to the bottom of my soul! Why is that not mine? Yet I was born with the capacity for all tenderness. But one does not make one’s destiny, one submits to it. I was a coward in my youth, *I was afraid* of life! Everything gets its reward.’

Flaubert on other rare occasions alluded to his ‘fear of life,’ and this has been understood as a reference to his epileptic tendency; but there is no occasion to restrict the significance of the remark. There are men who shrink from marriage, not from a want of tenderness, but from an excess; who have too vivid an imagination for its responsibilities, who cannot face the interference with other ties, the probable interruption to pursuits and pleasures, to what they believe to be the serious business of their lives. We have not all of us the happy hardness of Hotspur, and his contemptuous indifference to his wife’s anxieties.

The first mention of Guy de Maupassant, who was born just before Flaubert’s return from his eighteen months of Eastern travel, is in a letter to de Maupassant’s mother, dated October 30th, 1872: ‘Your son is right to love me, for I feel a real friendship for him. He is intellectual, well read, charming, and then he is your son, he is the nephew of my poor Alfred.’

Allusion has before been made to Flaubert’s wrath against



Lévy the publisher; this is how he speaks of it to George Sand:—

‘Do not vex yourself about Lévy! and do not let us talk any more about him. He is not worthy to occupy our thoughts for a moment. He has wounded me deeply in a sensitive place—the memory of my poor Bouilhet! That is irreparable. I am not a Christian, and the hypocrisy of pardon is impossible to me. I have only not to have anything to do with him again. That is all. I even wish never to set eyes on him more. Amen.

‘Do not take the exaggerations of my furibundity too seriously. Do not go and think that I “count on posterity to avenge me for the indifference of my contemporaries.”

‘All I intended to say was this: when a man does not address himself to the crowd, it is only just that the crowd should not pay him. That is political economy. Now I maintain that a work of art (worthy of that name, and executed with conscience) is beyond valuation, has no commercial value, cannot be paid for. Conclusion—if the artist has no private income, he must die of hunger! People think that the writer, because he no longer receives a pension from the great, is much more free, more noble. His whole social nobility now consists in not being the equal of a grocer. What an advance! As for me, you tell me: “Let us be logical,” but that is just the difficulty.

+ ‘I am not at all sure of writing good things, or that the book I am now thinking of (*Bouvard et Pécuchet*) can be well done; which, however, does not prevent me from undertaking it. I think that the idea of it is original; no more than that. And then, as I hope to spit into it the bile which is choking me, that is to say, to emit some truths, I hope in this way to purge myself, and be more Olympian afterwards, a quality in which I am absolutely deficient. Ah! How I would like to admire myself!’

The work of collecting facts for *Bouvard et Pécuchet* went on steadily in spite of failing health and other interruptions; at one time Flaubert was reading chemistry, at another agricultural hand-books, medicine, political philosophy, etc. etc., and still found time to laugh at himself occasionally:—

‘If my frightful cold goes on, my stay here (in Paris) will be useless! Am I going to become like that Canon of Poitiers of whom Montaigne speaks, who for thirty years had not gone out of his room “by reason of the incommidity of his melancholy,” and who none the less was in excellent health, “save for a rheum, which had fallen upon his stomach.” . . . In the matter of reading I have just swallowed the whole of the odious Joseph de Maistre. Surely that gentleman has been pretty fairly inflicted upon us; and to think of the modern socialists who have preached him up! beginning with the Saint Simonians, and ending with A. Comte. France is drunk with authority, whatever one may say. Here is a fine idea that I find in Raspail: *the doctors ought to be magistrates* in order that they may be able to force, etc., etc.’

Writing to Madame Roger des Genettes, he says of George Sand that she is ‘an excellent woman, but too angelical, too benedictory,’ and again protests against the sacrifice of justice to mercy:—

‘Talking of justice, I have recently paid my lord Lévy three thousand francs out of my own pocket for the *Dernières Chansons*; and the said child of Jacob has just been decorated. God of the Jews, thou conquerest!

‘You will think this very childish, but I have taken off my Star, I no longer wear the Cross of the Legion of Honour, and I have begged one of our common friends to invite me to dinner with Jules Simon in order that I may howl at His Excellency over this matter. And this will come to pass. I always keep the promises that I make to myself.’

To George Sand, from Croisset:—

‘I am not like M. de Vigny; I do not like the sound of the horn from the depths of the wood. For two hours an idiot planted in the island opposite me has been doing me to death with his instrument. The abominable wretch spoils the sunshine for me, and deprives me of the pleasure of tasting the summer, for it is glorious weather now, but I am bursting with

rage. However, I would like to have a little chat with you, dear master.

‘And first, all hail ! your seventieth year, which seems to me more robust than the twentieth of another ! What an Herculean constitution you have ! To bathe in a frozen river is a proof of strength which simply flattens me, and is the indication of a fund of health comforting to your friends. Live long ! Take care of yourself for the sake of your dear little girls, for good Maurice, for me too, for everybody, and I would add for literature, were I not afraid of your proud disdain.

‘There now ! Good ! the horn again. It’s maddening. I long to go and fetch the policeman.

‘No, I do not share your disdain, and I am perfectly ignorant of what you call “the pleasure of doing nothing.” As soon as I have no longer a book on hand, or am not thinking of writing one, I am seized by a boredom which makes me shout. In a word, life seems to me tolerable only when one juggles it away. Or perhaps one should give one’s self up to disorderly pleasures . . . and then !

‘. . . *He* seems to be quieting down. I breathe again.’

On another occasion Flaubert begs a friend to travel with him, because he was so bored by having nothing to do alone in the carriage ; ‘the other passengers think there is a dog in trouble in the train, but it is only M. Gustave Flaubert relieving his feelings.’

The necessity of submitting ‘The Candidate’ to the censure elicited the following axiom : ‘All governments hate literature, power does not like another power.’

‘The Candidate’ failed on the stage ; ‘it was a frost, if ever there was one’ ; Flaubert was really much cast down, but wrote to George Sand after the first representation :—

‘As for Cruchard, he is calm, very calm ! He had dined well before the performance, and supped still better afterwards. *Menu*, two dozen Ostend oysters, a bottle of champagne iced, three slices of roast beef, a truffle salad, coffee, and brandy thereto. His religion and his stomach sustain Cruchard.’

He was still more annoyed by the critics than by failure.

‘Villemessant reproaches me for not having got myself killed’ by the Prussians. It is enough to make one sick. And you wish me not to notice human folly, and to deprive myself of the pleasure of depicting it. But the comic is the solitary consolation of virtue.’

The excitement of bringing out ‘The Candidate’ told severely on Flaubert’s nerves, and he consulted a doctor, who recommended a Swiss town.

‘Did I tell you that I should go this summer and set up my nerves at Saint Moritz? It is in accordance with the advice of Dr. Hardy, who calls me an hysterical old woman. “Doctor,” I said to him, “you are perfectly right.”’

‘The good folk of Rouen, my brother included, spoke to me of the failure of “The Candidate” in a hushed voice, and with an air of contrition, as if I had gone through the assizes for a forgery. Not to succeed is a crime, and success is the criterion of good. I think this grotesque to the last degree. Explain to me why mattresses are spread under some falls, and thorns under others? (This particular letter is signed R. P. Cruchard. More Cruchard than ever.) I feel myself doting, flabby, worn-out, sheik, deliquescent, lastly calm and controlled, which is perhaps the concluding term of decadence.’

Flaubert’s last work was begun early in August 1874. On the 28th of July he writes to Guy de Maupassant: ‘I shall be back at Croisset on Friday evening, and on Saturday I begin *Bouvard et Pécuchet*! I tremble before it, as on the eve of embarking on a journey round the world.’ Six years later the book was still being written; and no wonder! Flaubert read and annotated fifteen hundred volumes in order to produce the four hundred octavo pages which he had all but completed when he died. The hard work told on him severely from the beginning; and then he was no



longer free from pecuniary anxieties after his generous emulation of King Lear.

In the spring of 1875 he says to George Sand :—

‘The reason why I so rarely write to you now, is that I do not wish to bore you with my complaints ; for nobody has a stronger conviction than myself of my own insupportability. . . .

‘. . . I send kisses to you all, above all to you, dear master, so great, so strong, so gentle. Your Cruchard more and more cracked, if cracked is the right word, for I feel my contents escaping.’

Writing to Zola in August 1875 he says, after announcing the commercial failure of M. Commanville, but not mentioning his own generosity :—

‘My existence is now completely upset ; I shall always have something to live upon, but under other conditions. As for literature I am incapable of any work. In about four months (during which we have been in hellish anxiety) I have written fourteen pages in all, and those bad ones. My poor brain will not stand such a blow. That seems to me quite clear.’

But in three months’ time he was at work on the short stories.

His last letter to George Sand was written in the year of her death, but is only dated ‘Sunday evening, 1876’ ; it is chiefly concerned with a review of her story *Flamarande*. He expresses strongly in it one of his favourite axioms :—

- † ‘As for letting my personal opinion of the characters that I bring on to the stage be seen ; no, no—a thousand times no ! I do not recognise my right to do so. If the reader does not draw from a book the morality that ought to be in it, the reason is that the reader is a fool, or the book is false in the point of accuracy. *For the moment a thing is true it is good.* Obscene books even are only immoral because they want truth. Things do not go on in that way in life. And observe that I hate what it is agreed to call *realism*, although I am made one of its pontiffs ; settle that for me.’

On the 19th of June 1876, writing to Madame Roger des Genettes, he says, after describing the plot of 'A Simple Soul' :—

'The story is by no means ironical, as you suppose, but on the contrary very serious, and very sad. I wish to stir compassion, to make sensitive souls weep, being one myself. Alas! Yes! last Saturday at the funeral of George Sand I broke out into sobs, on kissing little Aurora, and then on seeing the coffin of my old friend.'

## CHAPTER XX

### LETTERS TO GUY DE MAUPASSANT AND OTHERS

IN October of this year Flaubert had a great treat, a visit from his old friend Mrs. Tennant, the Gertrude Collier of the Trouville days; and he continued to correspond with her to the end of his life. Afterwards he wrote to her:—

‘How I long to see you! What a number of things I should have to tell you, sitting alone with you over the fire! Do you know what I call you in my innermost heart, when I think of you (and it often happens)? I call you “my youth.”’

Madame Roger des Genettes was his correspondent-in-chief at this time; but his letters even to her have less and less of the old personal touch; there is a great deal more of criticism upon contemporary literature, and less of the old humour. Occasionally we have such outbursts as: ‘The inanity of mankind does actually so overwhelm me that I feel like a fly with the Himalayas on its back. Never mind. I will try to spue out my venom into my book. This hope comforts me.’

Many of the letters are filled with requests for detailed information on some geographical or historical fact likely to be useful to *Bouvard et Pécuchet*; Flaubert’s sensitiveness of conscience on the question of accuracy increasing rather than diminishing with age. And meanwhile the ‘indignation of St. Polycarp’ also increased rather than diminished:—

‘Anacharsis Cloots used to say: “I belong to the party of indignation.” I am getting to resemble him; don’t you think so?

He was for the rest a queer fellow, and I have a weakness for him. When he was guillotined he wished to pass after his companions, in order to have time to confirm certain principles! What principles? I have no idea whatever, but I admire this fancy.

‘Here are two verses recently brought into the world by an Academician of Rouen, which I think splendid :

“ We always are happy, to deny it’s no good,  
When we see ourselves first in our own neighbourhood.”’

The author of this beautiful couplet was no less a person than M. Decorde, the poetical member of the Town Council of Rouen, who found that Louis Bouilhet was not great enough to be honoured with a monument. Flaubert says, writing to Guy de Maupassant :—

‘What do you say of these two verses, my boy? I beg you to meditate upon them carefully; then to declaim them with the appropriate emphasis, and you will spend a good quarter of an hour.’

The rest of this same letter contains some good advice :—

‘You complain of women who are “monotonous.” The remedy is very simple,—do without them. “Events have no variety.” That is a realistic complaint, and besides, what do you know about it? Perhaps you might look into them a little more closely. Have you ever believed in the existence of things? Is not everything an illusion? There is nothing true but “relations,” that is to say the fashion in which we perceive objects. “Vices are shabby,” but everything is shabby! “There are not sufficient turns of phrase.” Look for them and you will find them.

‘Lastly, my dear friend, you have to me the air of being thoroughly bored, and your boredom afflicts me, for you might employ your time more profitably. You *must*—do you hear, young man?—you *must* work more than that. I begin to have an idea that you are not very seriously hard-handed. Too many wenches, too much rowing, too much exercise! Yes, sir! The civilised man has not such a great need of locomotion as our



friends the doctors insist. You were born to make verses; make them. "All the rest is vanity," to begin with, your pleasures, and your health; there—stuff that into your nut. Besides, your health will be all the better if you follow your vocation. This remark is of profound philosophy, or rather hygiene. . . .

' . . . In a word, my dear Guy, beware of sadness. It is a vice; one takes a pleasure in being dismal, and when the dismal fit is over, as it has used up precious forces, one remains dulled by it. Then, one is sorry for it; but it is too late. Trust to the experience of a sheik to whom no extravagance is strange.'

Flaubert was often ready with a compliment to England:—

'Do you read the works of Herbert Spencer? That is a man, and a real positivist! A rare thing in France, whatever people say. Germany has nothing to compare to this thinker. For the rest the English seem to me enormous. Their attitude in the Eastern question has been superb in its impudence and skill.'

Talking of Dupanloup, Flaubert says:—

'His book upon the higher studies is of a very common order of intellect. He was a country parson, nothing more. His funeral oration upon Lamoricière seems to have been written by a bagman turned verger.'

And in fact in 1879 he recovered his spirits to some extent; for example:—

'And does not the funeral of Villemessant (editor of the *Figaro*) make you think? Embalmmment, as if of a Pharaoh, mass said by a bishop, the station transformed into a "chapelle ardente," "and return of the ashes" to Paris, and the day after, speech, plumes, music, immense crowd, I am sure of it. He enjoyed "an immense publicity": let us bow! I never bowed, I never bent my knee before that institution.

'And Pinard, my enemy Pinard (the counsel for the prosecution in the action against the author of *Madame Bovary*), the author of the obscene couplets found in the praying stool of

Madame Gras, Pinard, who invented Gambetta (to do the Empire a good turn),—this excellent M. Pinard communicating last Sunday at Notre Dame in the company of his grace the Duke de Nemours! Farce! Farce!’

Again we find him joking against himself in writing to Edmond de Goncourt :—

‘Here is my statement. My leg is better (he had broken it); however, it swells every evening, I can hardly walk more than a hundred yards, and I have to wear a bandage round my ankles.

‘Further, I have had one of my last grinders pulled out.

‘Further, I have had lumbago.

‘Further, a sty in my eye.

‘And as a matter of fact, since yesterday I rejoice in a pimple plump in the middle of my countenance. Apart from all that I am very well.’

The reading for *Bouvard et Pécuchet* as a rule proved irritating :—

‘Cups of bitterness are not grudged to your old friend, and I am reading stupid or rather stupefying things; the religious tracts of Monseigneur de Ségur, the lucubrations of Père Huguet, Jesuit, Bagneval de Puchesne, and that excellent M. Nicholas, who takes *Wolfenbüttel* for a man (because of the *Wolfenbüttel* fragments), and consequently he thunders against *Wolfenbüttel*. Modern religion is something ineffable decidedly, and Parfait in his *Arsenal of Devotion* has only skimmed the matter. In the Manual entitled “Pious Domestic” what do you say to this title for a chapter: *Of modesty during great Heat*? Then advice to maids not to take service with actors, innkeepers, and vendors of obscene engravings! Those are some flowers; and the idiots declaim against Voltaire, who is a spiritualist, and Renan, who is a Christian. O inanity! O infinitude! I shall have some trouble in my ninth chapter, *Religion*, to keep my balance. My pious readings would make a sinner of a saint.’

Apparently Madame Roger des Genettes, to whom these

remarks were addressed, did not find them altogether to her taste, for in the next letter to her there is an explanation :—

‘ You did not understand the spirit of my indignation : I am not astounded at people who try to explain the incomprehensible, but at those who think they have found its explanation, those who have “le bon Dieu,” or rather “le non Dieu,” in their pockets. Certainly—yes ! all dogmatism exasperates me. In short, Materialism and Spiritualism seem to me two impertinences.

‘ Recently, after having read no small number of Catholic books, I took up the philosophy of Lefebvre—“the last word of science” ; it is only fit to be thrown into the same latrines. That is my opinion. All ignorant creatures, all humbugs, all idiots, who never see more than one half of a whole : and I have re-read (for the third time in my life) all Spinoza. That “atheist” was in my opinion the most religious of men, because he admitted nothing but God. But just try and make our friends the ecclesiastics and the disciples of Cousin understand that !’

Guy de Maupassant having published some verses in a periodical was in danger of being prosecuted for immorality before the tribunal of Étampes, and further of losing the Government clerkship which he held. Flaubert was at once ready with advice, and as usual, when any person’s business but his own was in question, showed no less activity than skill in manipulating the different personages, whose influence was likely to be useful in diverting the calamity from the devoted head of his young friend. Among other things, he wrote him a letter, with leave to publish it in the *Gaulois*, which as it incidentally deals with the whole question of the obscene in literature, is worth quoting at length :—

‘CROISSET,’ February 19th, 1880.

‘ My dear good fellow,—Then it is true ? At first I thought it was a joke ! But no. I bend. Well, they are nice people

at Étampes. Are we going to be subject to all the tribunals in French territory, the colonies included? How happens it that a piece of verse, formerly inserted in a Parisian periodical which no longer exists, is prosecuted on being reproduced in a provincial journal, to which you probably never granted permission, and of whose existence you were doubtless ignorant? To what are we forced now? What must one write? How must one publish? In what a Bœotia do we live?

‘Accused of “an outrage to morals and public morality,”—two amiable synonyms, which form two counts in the accusation! I had a third outrage laid to my account, “and religious morality,” when I appeared before the eighth Chamber with *Madame Bovary*,—an action which proved a gigantic advertisement for me, and to which I attribute three-fourths of my success.

‘In short, I can’t understand it at all! Are you the victim of some personal grudge? There is something inexplicable beneath it all. Are they paid to debase the Republic as currency by making contempt and ridicule rain upon it? I believe so.

‘That you should be prosecuted for a political article, good; although I defy all the courts of justice to show me the practical utility of it. But for verses, for literature—no; that is too strong.

‘They will reply to you that your poetry has obscene tendencies! With the theory of tendencies one might have a sheep guillotined for dreaming of mutton. We should come to a definite understanding about this question of morality in the State. What is beautiful is moral,—there is the whole thing, and nothing more.

‘Poetry, like the sun, gilds the dunghill. So much the worse for those who do not see it. You have treated a commonplace to perfection, and you deserve laudation instead of deserving a fine and imprisonment.

“‘The whole talent of an author,” says La Bruyère, “consists in defining well, and painting well.” You have defined and painted well. What more does one want? “But the subject,” Prudhomme will object, “the subject, sir! Two lovers. A wash-tub! The bank of a river. You should have taken a waggish tone, treated it more delicately, with more subtlety, marked it



in passing with a point of elegance, and made a venerable ecclesiastic or a good doctor come on to the scene at the end, and deliver himself of a lecture upon the dangers of love. In a word, your story invites to the union of sexes. Ah!"

'In the first place, it does not invite, and even if it were so, in this time of amorous refinements, it is not a bad thing to preach the worship of women. Your poor lovers do not even commit an adultery! They are free, both of them, "without obligations to anybody." Struggle as you may, the party of order will find arguments. Be resigned.

'But denounce, in order that they may be suppressed, all the Greek and Roman classics without exception, from Aristophanes to Horace the good and Virgil the tender. Then, among foreign authors, Shakespeare, Goethe, Byron, Cervantes. Among ourselves, Rabelais, "from whom French literature springs," according to Chateaubriand, whose masterpiece turns upon an incest; and then Molière (see the rage of Bossuet against him); the great Corneille, the motive of his *Theodora* is prostitution; and further, La Fontaine, and Voltaire, and Rousseau, etc., and the fairy tales of Perrault! What is the subject of *Peau d'âne*! and where does the fourth act of *Le Roi s'amuse* take place?

'After that it will be necessary to suppress the history books, which soil the imagination. I choke with indignation.

'(Who will get a surprise? Friend Bardoux! He whose enthusiasm on reading your poem was so great that he wished to make your acquaintance, and soon after placed you in his office. Justice treats her protégés well!)

'And that excellent *Voltaire* (not the man, the periodical) which was joking me genteelly the other day on the bee in my bonnet, my belief in the hatred of literature! It is the *Voltaire* that is mistaken. More than ever I believe in the unconscious hatred of style. When one writes well, one has two enemies to face: first the public, because style forces it to think, obliges it to work; second, the government, because it feels a force in us, and power loves not another power.

'Government may change, monarchy, empire, republic, it matters little. The official æsthetics never change. In virtue of their place, its agents—administrators and magistrates—have

the monopoly of taste (see the terms of my acquittal). They know how one ought to write, their rhetoric is infallible, and they possess the means of convincing.

‘You were rising to Olympus, your face flooded with sunbeams, your heart full of hope, breathing in the beautiful, the divine, half into lightsome heaven—and a policeman’s paw flings you back into the gutter! You were conversing with the Muse, and you are taken for one of those who corrupt little girls. All perfumed with the waves of Permessus, you will be confounded with those gentlemen who haunt urinals for pleasure.

‘And you will take your seat, my young friend, on the felon’s bench, and you will hear an individual read your verses (not without faults of prosody), and read them again, laying stress upon particular words to which he will give a distorted significance. He will repeat some of them several times, like citizen Pinard: “The leg, gentlemen, the leg,” etc.

‘While your advocate will make a sign to you to control yourself—a word might ruin you,—you will vaguely feel behind you all the police force, all the army, all the power of the public weighing on your brain with an incalculable weight; then there will mount into your heart a hatred which you do not suspect, with plans of vengeance, arrested at once by pride.

‘But, once again, it is not possible. You will not be prosecuted, you will not be sentenced. There is a misunderstanding, a mistake, something or other. The keeper of the seals will intervene.

‘We are no longer in the glorious days of M. de Villèle. And yet, who knows? The world has its limits, but human inanity has no bounds.’

In this letter there is one of Flaubert’s curious slips of memory; it was not the eighth but the sixth court before which he appeared.

It is pleasant to see from the following letter that the clouds did not settle down unbroken upon Flaubert’s closing days, and that he found in Guy de Maupassant something of the outlet for his tenderness, which his older friends had given him:—

‘My dear good fellow,—I do not yet know on what day Goncourt, Zola, A. Daudet, and Charpentier will come here to lunch, dine, and perhaps sleep. This very evening they are to come to a decision, and I shall know on Friday. I think Monday will be the day on which I shall receive them. Then, if your eye permits it, transport your person to one of the said “cocos,” ascertain the date of their departure, and come with them.

‘Supposing all to spend Monday night at Croisset, as I have only four beds to offer, you will take that of the ladies’-maid, now absent.

‘Comment: so many inanities and improbabilities have come upon me in connection with your illness, that I should be much relieved for my own part, for my own personal satisfaction, to have you examined by my doctor Fortin, a mere “officier de santé,” whom I consider very good,

‘Another observation: if you have not the coin to make the journey, I have a fine double louis at your service. A refusal from delicacy would be utter vulgarity in dealing with me.

‘Last string: Jules Lemaître, to whom I have promised your recommendation to Graziani, will present himself at your office. He has talent, and is a real “literary man,” *rara avis*, to whom a bigger cage should be given than Havre.

‘Perhaps he will come to Croisset on Monday; and as it is my intention to make you all drunk, I have invited Fortin to lavish his cares on the sick.

‘The festival will miss some splendour if I do not have my disciple.—Your old friend.’

Two later letters to the same person illustrate Flaubert’s method in working up *Bouvard et Pécuchet*, and the latter one incidentally indicates the point of view from which that work should be read:—

‘I have received Baudry’s letter, which answers none of my questions. (I am beginning to ask myself whether I am mad!) But to make up for that he gives me advice upon the art of writing. “Why do you concern yourself with Botany, which you don’t know? You expose yourself to a mass of errors, which will be none the less absurd for being involuntary. There is no

good comedy in this line of ideas except that which is premeditated ; that which the other has made in spite of himself is comic all the same, but quite in another way ! ” etc.

‘Savour the daintiness of this raillery. Attic, is it not ?

‘And he reproaches me with ranking the tuberose among the liliaceæ, when I have exerted myself to tell him that Jean Jacques Rousseau classed them thus, and he informs me that “in roses the ovary is hidden beneath the petals,” *the very phrase of the letter which I sent him.*

‘I replied, that I begged his pardon, at the same time demanding a little indulgence. Never mind. To believe me *a priori* incapable of giving a piece of information supplied by others, and, secondly, to judge me charlatan enough to raise a laugh at my own expense, is pretty hard. Study this fact ; it seems to me big with psychology ; and I return to my hobby : “the hatred of literature.” You have read 1500 volumes to write *one*. That does not matter. From the moment that you know how to write, you are not serious, and your friends treat you like a street boy. I do not conceal the fact that I think this “wicked.”

‘I will get through with it *all alone*, even if I have to spend six years over it, for I am mad about it. But try through your professional friends to unearth me a botanist ; it would save me a lot of time. My love to you ! Your old friend in a state of exasperation beyond describing.’

‘No ! that is not enough, although it is already better. The anemones (in the family of the ranunculaceæ) without calyx, very good. But why has Jean Jacques Rousseau said (in his Botany), “most of the liliaceæ are without it” ? This “most” signifies that certain liliaceæ want it. The said Rousseau, not being a scientific man, but an observer of “nature,” may perhaps have made a mistake ! Why and how ? In short, I must have an exception to the rule. I already have it with certain ranunculaceæ, but, secondly, I want an exception to the exception, a piece of mischief which is suggested to me by the “most” of the citizen of Geneva.

‘Of course, I do not cling to any particular family, provided the plant is common. . . .’



The evening before his death, Madame Commanville received a letter announcing the speedy conclusion of his book, and ending with these words:—

‘I *was* right! I have my information from the Professor of Botany of the Jardin des Plantes; and I was right, because æsthetic is truth, and because up to a certain intellectual point (when one has method) one does not make mistakes, reality does not bend to the ideal, but confirms it. I had to make three journeys into different districts to find the right setting for *Bouvard et Pécuchet*, the environment peculiar to the action. Ah, ah! I triumph—*that* is a success, and I am flattered by it.’

On the 8th of May 1880, as Flaubert was dressing, he fell down unconscious; in a few moments he was dead; and the passengers on the steamer from Rouen to la Bouille thenceforward looked in vain for that queer M. Flaubert, who used to stand in his dressing-gown at the window of the old house at Croisset.

## CHAPTER XXI

### ‘BOUVARD ET PÉCUCHET’

FLAUBERT died when the last chapter of the first part of *Bouvard et Pécuchet* was but half finished ; the first third of it was already in its complete form, and of the remaining two-thirds, the skeleton, a remarkably fleshy skeleton, was already in existence. The notes only for the second part of the book, with their classification, were complete. Thus the work as it stands is unfinished, and has not been revised by its author ; still, the fragment is all but perfect in itself, and it is highly improbable that the second part would have proved equally readable with the first.

*Bouvard et Pécuchet* is the work which places Flaubert among the gods ; if he had never written that book he might have been classified as a writer of strong but clumsy romances ; a man of great genius, but somehow ineffective ; a man who had never found the right form in which to deliver his message, or who had only found it in the form of three short stories ; but this book exactly suits his peculiar temperament, his peculiar powers ; it is as individual and distinctive as *Faust* is of Goethe, *Frederick the Great* of Carlyle, *Henry IV.* of Shakespeare, *Don Quixote* of Cervantes, *Pantagruel* of Rabelais.

It is in this particular that the really great writers reveal themselves ; they write works which nobody else could possibly have written. Their works may be unpleasing, full of

defects (generally of excess), more or less without form, incomprehensible to the general public, unable to be squeezed into the shape recognised by any school of criticism, and yet, there they are. Generation after generation of literary artists goes to these works and draws some mysterious strength from them; while the general public talks of them with respect, but never reads them.

Such works are not unfrequently satirical in their first intent; their writers have studied the literature and the men of their day, and found them wanting; even where a criticism is not stated, it is often implied. Rabelais and Cervantes, sometimes under disguises, sometimes openly, pour contempt on the opinions of their contemporaries; Shakespeare abounds in parody, in demonstrations of the ineffectiveness of self-complacent humanity; Carlyle's laugh only gives way to his far less pleasing declamation. Again, it is the universally applicable satire that lives; the satire which nevertheless seemed to be only of temporary application. All the other Greek comic poets are gone, but we still have Aristophanes; and yet nothing apparently could be more local than his jokes. Would Plato's philosophy have preserved his works without his wit, and his endless parody on his contemporaries? Mere learning, accurate reasoning, perfection of method,—none of these alone or in combination are enough to insure the perpetuity of a deeply thoughtful work; it seems as if to secure immortality the personification of ideas is a first necessity. Ideas change, but the human attitude towards them is always the same. Gorgias and Phædrus will always live, because their attitude towards knowledge is a permanent attribute of humanity; there will always be kindly, self-complacent old men believing that virtue can be taught, and willing to teach it; there will always be ardent young men unable to distinguish between your true man

and your windbag, and lost in admiration of the last University Extension lecturer that they have encountered. Further, it is not your mere dramatist who lives; it is the dramatist who places his characters in connection with the big subjects. Tragedies and comedies of everyday life, however well they may be written, do not make permanent impressions; each generation makes them for itself, and prefers its own to any other. The world of forgotten plays!—what a universe!—from the authors of the middle and new comedy onwards! And the novels of the nineteenth century, those that are read by Tom, Dick, and Sal—what a limbo for the twentieth century to peep into! Few people reflect upon the vast quantity of literature that has practically passed away, where one book has survived. A library is an appalling necropolis; crowded with the dead, the dying, and a few semi-revivable corpses.

The literary man is always interested in studying the problems of the human mind; the intellectual difficulties of man always concern him. It is by the literary man pre-eminently that permanence is given to an author; and so the permanent books are mostly books which deal with man in his relation to the infinite, the permanent, not the ephemeral problems. The more a man has learned the more he requires; as his experience improves his discrimination improves, his power of enjoyment improves, and those who can in all ages satisfy his educated demands, please his advanced taste, are the imperishable giants of literature.

When we are very young we like hymn-tunes sung by our mother, and the popular airs of the barrel-organ; the finest performance by Richter's orchestra of a symphony of Beethoven is to us an indistinguishable medley of sound; but, if we have the good fortune to hear much music, the barrel-organ becomes unendurable to us, the hymn valuable



only for non-musical associations, but oh ! what a paradise of delight is the symphony !

Thus it is with literature ; the student grows to require better and yet better work, and to recognise it when it is presented to him ; all but the best seems trivial.

So strong is our interest in the relations of man to the infinite that we even read an allegory into mere narrative. The Homeric poems were not regarded by learned Greeks as being only stories of fighting, or the celebration of the deeds of heroic ancestors ; there were those who saw in them as many mystic allusions as have been discovered in the Song of Solomon. Virgil in the Middle Ages was either a saint or a magician ; and it would be impossible to enumerate the works which deal with the inner significance of the historical books of the Hebrews. To the whole of Dante there is a threefold interpretation. No man has ever yet discovered all that lurks beneath the surface of the second part of *Faust*.

Of books of this kind *Bouvard et Pécuchet* is perhaps the only one whose author's mind is perfectly open to us. We possess the key, and know that we have to do with something more than a farcical story.

#### PART I.

Flaubert was writing *Bouvard et Pécuchet* all his life. We have seen how, in his very first letter, he proposed to a school-fellow to write comedies, in which would be repeated all the silly things that a lady who visited his father's house was in the habit of saying ; and his other letters give abundant indications of the serious view which he took of the inanity of his fellow-creatures. As early as 1850 he was contemplating a Dictionary of Accepted Opinions.

The plot of *Bouvard et Pécuchet* is very simple ; two clerks,

middle-aged men (they are each delighted to find that the other is forty-seven), meet accidentally and strike up a warm friendship. The most trivial of coincidences is the foundation of their friendship; happening to seat themselves on the same bench on the Boulevard Bourbon, they take off their hats, and discover that they both have the habit of writing their names inside them.

In spite of their similarity of tastes the men soon to be united in the bonds of warmest friendship are really dissimilar. Bouvard is stout, florid, a widower, fond of indecent stories, discourses cynically of women, and hitherto his chief friend has been one Barberou, an ex-bagman, who is expert in tricks with billiard-balls: Pécuchet, on the other hand, is thin; owing to the extreme length of his nose, his face seems all profile; he is a bachelor, a prig, somewhat niggardly, but of an insatiable curiosity, and up to this time he has chiefly admired a Professor Dumouchel, who also claims rank as an author, having produced a *memoria technica*.

They get into the habit of walking out together, of visiting all the museums; when they go to the botanical gardens they admire the cedar, *because it was brought over in a hat*. At the library they would like to know the exact number of the volumes. When they see an old piece of furniture, they regret not having lived at the period when it was made, though they are absolutely ignorant of the date of that period. In short, they are the people for whom the Beefeaters at the Tower of London and the vergers of our Cathedrals provide information. Some of them go to Rome, and even further.

As their intellects become more active, they develop an increasing dislike to office-work. One day Bouvard received a letter; his putative uncle, really his father, has died, and left him ten thousand pounds!

For two years the friends waited, and then, when Pécuchet had earned his retiring pension in the Admiralty they endeavoured to realise what had become the dream of their lives. They bought a house and small estate in the country between Caen and Falaise, in a village called Chavignolles, and there they settled.

This is the environment which Flaubert sought for so carefully.

On the first night of their arrival in their new home their very sleep was characteristic: 'Bouvard slept on his back with his mouth open, his head bare; Pécuchet on his right side, his knees in his stomach, coddled in a cotton night-cap, and both snored under the moonbeams that came in through the windows.'

The notables of the village were the Comte de Faverges, formerly a deputy, whose fatuity was quoted; the mayor M. Foureau, who sold wood, plaster, all kinds of things; the lawyer, M. Marescot; the doctor, M. Vaucorbeil; the Abbé Jeufroy, and the Widow Bordin, who lived on her private income.

The friends at once plunged into gardening and farming; with the results, which usually wait on amateurs, who derive their experience solely from books, and embark recklessly upon experiments suggested by the last faddist. They tried to manufacture liqueurs, all kinds of alimentary preserves; their failure led them to the conclusion that they ought to study chemistry.

In the person of the two friends Flaubert then begins his examination of the popular text-books of science. His method of suggesting criticism and 'the want of method in the acquisition of knowledge' is very well illustrated by the following quotation. It should be noted that he does not criticise the chemical text-book *as a chemist*, but as a

person who, wishing to learn chemistry and consulting a text-book, finds that the text-book is either self-contradictory or gives information which is after all no information. And it is in this way that he deals with all the sciences which are reviewed in this book: the satire being directed sometimes against the carelessness or ineptitude of the authorities; sometimes against the attitude of mind in which their statements are accepted by the learner.

‘In order to learn chemistry they procured Regnault’s course, and learned first that simple bodies are perhaps compound.

‘They are divided into metalloids and metals—a distinction in which there is nothing absolute, says the author. In the same way for acids and bases; a body being able to behave like an acid or a base according to circumstances!

‘The notation seemed fantastic to them. The multiple proportions confused Pécuchet.

“‘Since one molecule of A, I suppose, is combined with several particles of B, it seems to me that this molecule must be divided into as many particles; but if it is divided, it ceases to be a unity, the primordial molecule. In short, I don’t understand it.”

“‘Neither do I!” said Bouvard.

‘And they had recourse to a less difficult work, that of Girardin, from which they acquired the certainty that ten litres of air weigh ten grammes, that there is no lead in lead-pencils, that the diamond is nothing but carbon.

‘What astonished them above all is that the earth as an element has no existence.’

Getting into difficulties with their chemistry, they went to Vaucorbeil, the doctor, and asked for an explanation of ‘the higher atomicity.’ He did not give it; thundered against the baneful influence of chemistry upon medical science. The sight of his diagrams suggested to Pécuchet the study of anatomy; he borrowed the manual of Alexander Lauth, and learned the divisions of the frame. They were amazed



at the dorsal column, 'which is sixteen times stronger than if the Creator had made it straight. Why precisely sixteen times?'

They then bought a papier-maché model, which arrived from Paris in a long coffin-like box, and excited the curiosity of the village; they were credited with the possession of a real corpse, and the mayor came in person to inspect, semi-officially. What right had they, not being physicians, to be in possession of such an object? He wrote to the Prefect. Bouvard and Pécuchet derived some comfort from reflecting on their own superiority; they yearned to suffer for science.

Meanwhile the doctor derided them, but continued to lend them books. They became interested in exceptional developments, unusual physiological phenomena. 'Why had they not known that mayor of Angoulême, whose nose weighed three pounds?'

Anatomy naturally led to physiology; they tried experiments to prove—'1, That the weight of a man is decreasing every minute; 2, that animal heat is developed by muscular contractions, and that it is possible by agitating the thorax and the pelvian extremities to raise the temperature of a warm bath.'

While they were thus engaged in the wash-house, Pécuchet naked in the scales, Bouvard equally naked in the bath, a strange dog came in, proved at first impervious to blandishment, then ran off with Pécuchet's trousers, which it sat on. Eventually it proved amenable, and was then used for experiments disapproved of by the Antivivisection Society, all of which failed.

Other similar experiments were equally unsuccessful, and at last, having discovered that Borelli assigns to the heart sufficient strength to lift a weight of 180,000 pounds, while

Keill estimates it only at eight ounces, they came to the conclusion that physiology is the romance of medicine, and gave it up.

They then came across the Medical Manual of Raspail, the clearness of whose medical doctrine seduced them : ‘All diseases come from worms. They spoil the teeth, devour the lungs, expand the liver, ravage the intestines, and produce noises in them. The best cure for them is camphor.’

(This Raspail was called in to the deathbed of Caroline Flaubert.)

Bouvard and Pécuchet at once became apostles of camphor. They happened to cure Madame Bordin of a small ailment, and from that time ran the usual course of amateur physicians.

They soon began to imagine themselves ill ; and before long their ideal was ‘Cornaro the Venetian nobleman who by means of a régime attained to an extreme old age.’

The study of hygienic manuals caused them to wonder how they had ever contrived to live so long.

‘All meats have inconveniences. The pudding and the sausage, the red herring, the lobster, and game are “refractory.” The bigger a fish is, the more gelatine it contains, and consequently the heavier it is. Vegetables cause acidity, macaroni gives dreams, cheeses, “considered generally, are difficult of digestion.” A glass of water in the morning is “dangerous.” Each drink or comestible being followed by a similar warning, or the words, “bad—beware of the abuse of it—does not suit everybody.” Why bad ? In what does the abuse consist ? How know if such a thing suits you ?’

What a problem breakfast is ! They gave up coffee with milk on account of its detestable reputation, and then chocolate, ‘for it is a mass of indigestible substances.’ There remained tea. ‘But nervous persons should forswear it

entirely.' However, Decker in the seventeenth century prescribed twenty decalitres a day to clean out the pancreas.

This piece of information shook their confidence in Morin, the more that he condemns every form of headdress, hats, bonnets, and caps, a pretension revolting to Pécuchet.

Then they bought Becquerel's treatise, in which they saw that 'the pig is in itself a good form of food,' 'tobacco perfectly innocent,' and coffee 'indispensable to military men.'

Up to that time they had believed in the unwholesomeness of damp places. Not at all! Casper declares them less deadly than others. One does not bathe in the sea without invigorating one's skin. Bégin declares that one should jump into it in full perspiration. Wine taken neat after soup is said to be excellent for the stomach. Lévy charges it with damaging the teeth. Lastly, the flannel vest, that safeguard, that protection of health, that palladium beloved by Bouvard, and inherent to Pécuchet without any subterfuges or dread of adverse opinion whatever, is by some authors pointed at as dangerous to men of a plethoric and sanguine temperament.

What then is hygiene?

'Truth this side of the Pyrenees, error beyond,' affirms M. Lévy, and Becquerel adds that it is not a science.

Then they ordered for their dinner oysters, a duck, pork and cabbages, cream, a Pont-l'Evêque cheese, and a bottle of Burgundy. It was an emancipation, almost a revenge, and they derided Cornaro! One must be imbecile to let oneself be tyrannised over as he was. What contemptible baseness to be always thinking of lengthening one's life! Life is only good if it is enjoyed.

"Another piece?"

"Certainly."

"I too!"

“To your health!”

“To yours!”

“And let us snap our fingers at everything!”

They became excited.

Bouvard announced that he wanted three cups of coffee, even though he was not a military man. Pécuchet, his cap over his ears, took pinch after pinch of snuff and sneezed fearlessly!

After this repast the friends repaired to the garden to take their coffee, and, as the evening was a fine one, soon lost themselves in admiration of the stars; this led them to an astronomical discussion, and then to the *Harmonies of Bernardin de Saint Pierre*.

‘Harmonies vegetable and terrestrial, aerial, aquatic, human, fraternal, and even conjugal; everything was there, not omitting invocations to Venus, the Zephyrs, and the Loves. They were lost in admiration because fish had fins, birds wings, seeds a covering, full of that philosophy which discovers virtuous intentions in nature, and considers her like a kind of Saint Vincent de Paul always occupied in bestowing benefactions!’

‘Then they admired her prodigies, water-spouts, volcanoes, virgin forests, and they bought M. Dupuy’s work upon the “Marvels and Beauties of Nature in France.” Cantal possesses three of them, Hérault five, Burgundy two—no more, while Dauphiné reckons to itself alone as many as fifteen wonders.’

From such studies they easily passed to Buffon and Cuvier; they began to collect fossils.

‘One afternoon, as they were turning over some flints on the high road, the Curé passed, and, addressing them in a wheedling voice, said:

“These gentlemen are interested in geology. Very good.”

‘For he had a high opinion of this science. It confirms the authority of the Scriptures by proving the deluge.

‘Bouvard spoke of coprolites, which are the petrified excrements of animals.



‘The Abbé Jeufroy seemed surprised at the fact ; after all, if it were so, it was a reason the more for admiring the ways of Providence.’

The news that an elephant’s jaw was said to have been discovered at Villers, and an alligator near Port-en-Bessin at the foot of the cliff, sent them off on a fossil-hunting expedition. Their first unauthorised attack on the cliffs ended in a demand for a passport, and conflict with the local authorities.

‘ Besides a passport, they were in want of many things, and, before undertaking any further explorations, they consulted the *Geological Travellers’ Guide* by Boué. One should have, first of all, one’s soldier’s haversack, then a surveyor’s chain, a file, nippers, a compass, and three hammers, passed into a belt, which is hidden under the overcoat, and thus “ preserves you from that appearance of originality which should be avoided on a journey.” As stick, Pécuchet adopted with full confidence the tourist’s stick, six feet long with a long iron point. Bouvard preferred an umbrella-cane or polybranch umbrella, whose handle can be withdrawn in order to hook on the cover, which is carried separately in a little bag. They did not forget strong boots with gaiters ; each had “ two pairs of braces, because of perspiration,” and although “ one cannot present one’s self everywhere in a cap,” they shunned the expense of “ one of those folding hats which bear the name of the hatter Gibus, their inventor.”

‘ The same work gives precepts for conduct : “ To know the language of the countries to be visited ” ; they knew it. “ To preserve a modest behaviour ” ; it was their custom. “ Not to have too much money about one ” ; nothing simpler. Lastly, to avoid all kinds of difficulties it is good to adopt the “ qualification of engineer.”

“ Well, we will adopt it.” ’

An expedition to Fécamp, though the travellers were thus admirably equipped, nearly ended in disaster ; for Pécuchet discoursed so eloquently of the possibility of a sudden cata-

clysm, whereby the shores of England should be united to those of France, that Bouvard, who had eaten nothing all day, hearing a rumbling of stones from the cliff, concluded that the period of the catastrophe had already arrived, and fled in terror along the shore.

Then they began the study of geology.

‘From biographies and extracts they learnt something of the doctrines of Lamarck and Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire.

‘All that was contrary to the received views, to the authority of the Church.

‘Bouvard felt as it were the alleviation of a broken yoke.

“‘I should like to see now what answer citizen Jeufroy would give me about the deluge!’”

‘They found him in his little garden, where he was waiting for the members of the Church Maintenance Committee, who were to meet immediately to consider the purchase of a chasuble.

“‘These gentlemen require?’”

“‘An explanation, if you please.’”

‘And Bouvard began:—“What did these expressions in Genesis mean, ‘The depths that are broken up,’ and ‘the cataracts of Heaven’? For a depth is not broken up, and Heaven has no cataracts.”

‘The Abbé closed his eyelids, then replied that it was always necessary to distinguish between the letter and the sense. Things which are shocking to you at first become regular if you go to the bottom of them.

“‘Very good! But how explain the rain that surpassed the highest mountains, which are two leagues high! Think of that, two leagues! A thickness of two leagues of water!’”

‘And the Mayor coming up added: “Deuce take it! What a bath!”

“‘Admit,” said Bouvard, “that Moses exaggerates like the devil.”

‘The parson had read Bonald, and replied:—“I do not know his motives; doubtless it was to inspire the people whom he guided with a wholesome awe!”

“Lastly, this mass of water, where did it come from?”

“How should I know! The air was changed into rain, as happens every day.”

‘Through the garden gate they saw M. Girbal enter, the Superintendent of Taxes, with Captain Heurtaux, a landowner, and Beljambe, the innkeeper, arm-in-arm with Langlois, the grocer, who walked with difficulty on account of his cough.

‘Pécuchet, without noticing them, took up the word:—

“Pardon me, M. Jeufroy. The weight of the atmosphere—science proves it for us—is equal to that of a mass of water which would make an envelope of nearly eleven yards round the earth. Consequently, if all the air fell down condensed into a liquid form, it would increase the mass of existing water very little.”

‘And the tradesmen opened their eyes wide, and began to listen.

‘The Curé got vexed.

“Will you deny that shells have been found upon the mountains? What put them there if it was not the deluge? They are not in the habit, I suppose, of growing in the earth all of themselves like carrots!” and this joke having caused the company to laugh, he added, pursing up his lips: “Unless that is another of the discoveries of science?”

‘Bouvard wished to reply by the upheaval of mountains, the theory of Élie de Beaumont.

“Not of my acquaintance!” replied the Abbé.

‘Foreau hastened to say: “He comes from Caen: I saw him once at the Prefecture.”

“But if your deluge,” resumed Bouvard, “had transported the shells, we should find them broken on the surface, and not at depths of sometimes more than nine hundred feet.”

‘The priest took refuge in the veracity of the Scriptures, the traditions of the human race, and the animals discovered in ice in Siberia.

“That does not prove that men lived at the same time as they.” The earth, according to Pécuchet, was considerably older.

“The delta of the Mississippi goes back to tens of thousands of years. The actual epoch is at least a hundred thousand.” Manetho’s lists . . .

‘The Comte de Faverges advanced.

‘All were silent on his arrival.

‘“Go on, pray! What were you saying?”

‘“These gentlemen were finding fault with me,” replied the Abbé.

‘“About what?”

‘“About the Holy Scriptures, my lord.”

‘Bouvard at once alleged that they had a right to discuss religion as geologists.

‘“Take care,” said the count; “you know the saying, my dear sir—a little science leads from it, a great deal brings back to it.” And in a tone at once superior and paternal: “Believe you will come back to it! You will come back!”’

And so the conversation proceeded; attack and defence being alike conducted inadequately.

Tired of geology, the friends took to simply enjoying the country; one day, feeling thirst after a long walk, they went into a public-house, where they bought an old oak chest, and engaged the young servant as a subsidiary domestic, embarking in both speculations, to some extent, on the recommendation of one Gorju, a vagabond joiner, whose acquaintance they had previously made.

‘Six months later they had become antiquarians, and their house was like a museum.’

Among the objects which they cherished were:—

‘Two coco-nuts that had belonged to Pécuchet from his youth up, an earthenware barrel, on which a peasant rode. Then in a straw basket there was a farthing which had been brought up by a duck.

‘In front of the bookcase stood a shell table with plush ornaments. Its cover supported a cat holding a mouse in its maw—a petrification from Saint-Allyre, a work-box also in shells, and on this box a decanter of brandy contained a *bon-chrétien* pear.’

The rest of the collection was to match, including a butter-pot, bearing in white letters on a chocolate ground:



‘Made in the presence of His Royal Highness the Duke of Angoulême at Noron, October 3rd, 1847.’

Archæology naturally led to architecture; they visited cathedrals, learnt to recognise and protest against ‘the debased’ in style; from the cathedrals the step to castles and manor-houses was not a long one, and then in due sequence came local traditions and Celtic remains.

Meanwhile their neighbour, Madame Bordin, a keen woman of business, with a Norman’s hunger for land, courted them, Bouvard especially, whose weakness for the sex she proposed to turn to account. She and others visited the museum, and were edified with the spectacle of Bouvard ‘doing a monk of the Middle Ages in an attitude of prayer.’

Such respectable studies won the favour of the Count himself, who indicated the existence of a holy-water basin, half-buried in the grass from time immemorial, behind the wall of the cemetery; this, on being exhumed, was pronounced triumphantly to be a ‘druidical bowl’ by an authority to whom they appealed.

Stimulated by success, they plunged more and more deeply into Celtic archæology; and eventually transported the bowl to their museum by night. They did not, however, escape the eye of the Abbé Jeufroy, who, by protesting against the sacrilege, judiciously contrived to sell them a piece of earthenware at an exorbitant price as ‘Old Rouen.’

Celticism, by an easy sequence, introduced nature-worship, and soon everything Bouvard saw was phallic. Meanwhile the Abbé’s soup-tureen brought on china-mania, and a subsequent disillusionment as to the value of marks on pottery.

A tour into Brittany was planned; historical studies were a necessary preliminary; soon they were deep in the French Revolution. From the difficulty of coming to definite conclusions about the men of that time, they inferred that it

was necessary to know *all* history. Then came the difficulty of remembering dates, and they began to use the *Memoria Technica* of Pécuchet's friend Dumouchel, with results not altogether happy.

'To secure greater clearness they took as "memorio-technical base," their own house, their domicile, associating a distinct fact with each part of it; and the court, the garden, the outskirts, the whole country, had no longer any significance except as an aid to memory. The hedges in the fields defined certain epochs, the apple-trees were genealogical stems, the bushes battles, the whole world became symbolic. They sought for heaps of things absent from their walls, ending by seeing them, but forgot the dates that they represented.

'Pécuchet tried to explain myths, and got lost in the *Scienza Nuova*.

"Will you deny the design of Providence?"

"Don't know it," said Bouvard.

'And they decided to refer to Dumouchel. The professor declared that he was now dead-beat in the matter of history.

"It changes every day. The kings of Rome are contested, and the journeys of Pythagoras; Belisarius, William Tell, are attacked, and even the Cid, who, thanks to the most recent discoveries, has become a mere bandit. It is to be desired that discoveries should cease to be made, and indeed the *Institute* should establish a kind of canon prescribing what we ought to believe."

Despairing of their authorities, the two friends determined to write a history of their own, and selected as subject the Duke of Angoulême.

The result is an excellent parody of the accepted form of biography. The friends went to the library at Caen for information.

'When they had taken notes they drew up a programme:—

'Birth and infancy of but little interest. One of the tutors is the Abbé Guénée, the enemy of Voltaire.

‘At Turin he is made to cast a cannon, and he studies the campaigns of Charles VIII. Also he is, in spite of his youth, named colonel of a regiment of noble guards.

‘1797. His marriage.

‘1814. The English seize Bordeaux. He runs up behind them and shows his person to the inhabitants. Description of the prince’s person.

‘1815. Bonaparte surprises him. All of a sudden he summons the king of Spain, and Toulon, but for Massena, would have been delivered to England.

‘Operations in the south. He is beaten, but released under the promise of restoring the crown diamonds carried off at full speed by his uncle the king.

‘After the Hundred Days he returns with his parents, and lives quietly. Several years pass.

‘The Spanish War. As soon as he has crossed the Pyrenees, victory everywhere follows the son of Henry IV. He carries the Trocadéro, reaches the Columns of Hercules, annihilates faction, embraces Ferdinand, and comes back.

‘Triumphal arches, flowers presented by maidens, dinners at the Prefecture. *Te Deum* in the cathedrals. The Parisians are at the height of intoxication. The town offers him a banquet. Allusions to the hero are sung upon the stage.

‘The enthusiasm diminishes, for in 1827 a subscription ball at Cherbourg fails.

‘As he is High Admiral of France, he inspects the fleet, which is going to sail for Algiers.

‘July 1830. Marmontel informs him of the state of affairs. Then he flies into such a rage that he wounds his own hand with the general’s sword.

‘The King commits to him the command of all the troops.

‘He meets detachments of the line at the Bois de Boulogne, and has not a single word to say to them.

‘From Saint Cloud he flies to Sèvres Bridge. Coldness of the troops. That does not shake him. The Royal Family leave Trianon. He takes a seat at the foot of an oak, unfolds a map, reflects, remounts his horse, passes in front of Saint Cyr, and sends words of hope to the students.

‘At Rambouillet the bodyguards bid good-bye to him.

‘He embarks, and is sick during the whole of the passage. End of his career.

‘One should observe in it the important part played by bridges.

‘First, he exposes himself unnecessarily on the Bridge of the Inn ; he takes the Bridge of the Saint Esprit, and the Bridge of Lauriot ; at Lyons the two bridges are fatal to him, and his fortune expires before the Bridge of Sèvres.

‘Catalogue of his virtues. Useless to vaunt his courage, to which he united deep policy. For he offered every soldier sixty francs to abandon the Emperor, and in Spain he tried to corrupt the constitutional party by money down.

‘His reserve was so profound that he consented to the marriage planned between his father and the Queen of Etruria ; to the formation of a new cabinet after the “ordonnances” ; to the abdication in favour of Chambord ; to everything one wished.

‘He was not, however, wanting in firmness. At Angers he cashiered the infantry of the National Guard, which, jealous of the cavalry, and by means of a stratagem, had succeeded in forming his escort, so that His Highness found himself entangled among the privates to the extent of getting his knees squeezed. But he blamed the cavalry, the cause of the disorder ; and pardoned the infantry,—a regular judgment of Solomon.

‘His piety was shown by numerous devotions, and his clemency by obtaining the pardon of General Debelle, who had borne arms against him.

‘Personal details characteristic of the Prince :—At the château of Beauregard, in his infancy, he took a pleasure in digging out, along with his brother, a pond, which is still to be seen.

‘Once he visited the barracks of the Chasseurs, asked for a glass of wine, and drank it to the health of the King.

‘While walking, in order to mark the step, he used to repeat to himself, “One two, one two, one two.”

‘Some of his phrases have been preserved. To a deputation from Bordeaux he said : “What consoles me for not being at Bordeaux is to find myself with you !”



‘To the Protestants of Nismes : “I am a good Catholic, but I shall never forget that my most distinguished ancestor was a Protestant.”

‘To the students at Saint Cyr, when all was lost : “Good, my friends! The news is good! All is well! very well!”

‘After the abdication of Charles x. : “Since they do not want me, they must settle it between them!”

‘And in 1814, on every occasion in the smallest villages : “No more war, no more conscription, no more united rights!”

‘His style was as good as his word. His proclamations are unsurpassed.

‘The first of the Comte d’Artois began thus :—“Frenchmen, the brother of your King has arrived!”

‘That of the Prince : “I arrive. I am the son of your kings! You are Frenchmen,”

‘Order of the day, dated from Bayonne : “Soldiers, I arrive!”

‘Another, in the midst of defection : “Continue to support, with the vigour which befits the French soldier, the struggle that you have begun. France expects it of you!”

‘Last of all, at Rambouillet : “The King has entered into an arrangement with the Government established at Paris, and everything inclines us to believe that this arrangement is on the point of being concluded.” “Everything inclines us to believe” was sublime.

““One thing troubles me,” said Bouvard, “there is no mention of his love-affairs.”

‘And they noted in the margin, “Inquire into the Prince’s amours!”’

On their return from Caen they found their household in some confusion ; the famous chest, which was on the point of completion, broken up by a stray cow, according to Gorju ; the said Gorju and the new maid Mélie issued suspiciously from the barn ; the old housekeeper, Germaine, was apparently drunk ; Madame Bordin appeared to be making an inspection of the premises.

‘We do not know,’ said Bouvard, ‘what goes on in our

own household, and yet we claim to discover what was the colour of the Duke of Angoulême's hair, and story of his amours.'

Eventually they decided upon a course of historical novels, as 'History is defective without imagination.'

Their first delight in Walter Scott was spoiled by the discovery that he falsifies the order of events, while Dumas is reckless in his history.

Pécuchet took to historical plays.

'He swallowed two Pharamonds, three Clovises, four Charlemagnes, several Philip Augustuses, a crowd of Jeanne d'Arcs, numerous Pompadours, and conspiracies of Cellamare.

'Nearly all seemed to him more inane than the romances. For there is a conventional history for the stage that is indestructible. Louis XI. will never fail to kneel in front of the figures on his hat; Henry IV. will be for ever jovial; Mary Stuart tearful, Richelieu cruel; lastly, all the characters are shown in one single mould, from love of simplicity and respect for ignorance; with the result that the play-writer, instead of elevating, debases, and encourages stupidity instead of knowledge.'

Other novels proved no more satisfactory than the historical romances; even Balzac, who wrote a book on chemistry, another on the bank, another on printing-presses, just as one Ricard had done 'the cabman,' 'the water-carrier,' 'the coco-nut seller.' 'We should have them upon all the trades, and all the provinces, then upon all the towns, and the floors of each house, and upon each individual; and then we shall have literature no longer, but statistics or ethnography.'

Tragedy and comedy then occupied the attention of the friends; both seemed false.

One day Madame Bordin called to return a volume of Pigault-Lebrun which she had borrowed; Bouvard was reciting; she begged him to continue. After some passages

from Racine and Molière, addressed to Pécuchet, Bouvard delivered Hernani's apostrophe to Dona Sol; his eyes met those of Madame Bordin, sentimental relations declared themselves; Bouvard became more enamoured of the stage than ever, and he and Pécuchet resolved to write plays. Their ambition proved at first greater than their power: and as usual they had recourse to manuals; before long they thought it advisable to study grammar, and quickly came to the opinion that 'syntax is a fancy and grammar an illusion.' They excited themselves over questions of style and taste to such an extent that Pécuchet developed a jaundice. When it was at its height Madame Bordin called; she wished to buy a meadow of one acre, the lawyer Marescot soon followed her; shortly afterwards Vaucorbeil the doctor, and no less a person than the Comte de Faverges, armed with political pamphlets, and bearing a novel in his hand which he had confiscated from Mélie, discovered reading in the kitchen.

'They talked of novels. Madame Bordin liked them when they were not sad.

"Writers," said M. de Faverges, "represent life to us under too glowing colours."

"One must represent . . ." objected Bouvard.

"Then one has only to follow the example . . ."

"There is no question of example!"

"At least you will admit they may fall into the hands of a young girl. I have a daughter."

"A charming one!" said the lawyer, assuming the face which he wore at marriage-contracts.

"Well, for her sake, or rather that of the persons who surround her, I forbid them in my house, for the People, my dear sir, the People. . . ."

And so forth; each of the assembled company contributing his share to the indictment against literature, which

is a favourite topic with well-meaning people, who have no real love of books.

‘After the departure of the guests they epitomised what they had just heard. The morality of art is contained for each individual in the side which flatters his interests.’

## PART II.

The Revolution of 1848 drew the attention of the friends to politics; as trees of liberty were planted in Paris, the Municipal Council of Chavignolles accepted a young poplar-tree from Bouvard, which was with all due ceremony placed at the entrance of the village.

The Abbé Jeufroy took charge of the function, and made a speech, in which, ‘after having thundered against Kings, he glorified the Republic.’

“Do we not speak of the Republic of letters, the Christian Republic? What could be more innocent than the one, more beautiful than the other? Jesus Christ gave the form of our sublime device; the tree of the people was the tree of the Cross. In order that religion may render her fruits, she needs charity,” and in the name of charity, the ecclesiastic adjured his brethren not to commit any disorder, to return home peacefully.’

All were charmed with the speech and the ceremonial; however, it was not long before the workmen began to sing the Marseillaise, Gorju in their midst, and the recently appointed Schoolmaster Petit at their side. Foureau, the mayor, began to see visions of the guillotine.

Soon everybody began to think of being a deputy, from Gorju upwards. The captain dreamed of it under his policeman’s cap, while smoking his big pipe, and the schoolmaster also in his school, and the parson between two



prayers, insomuch that he sometimes surprised himself with his eyes turned to Heaven, in the act of saying:—‘Grant, O God, that I may be made a deputy!’

Bouvard and Pécuchet were infected with the same fever, but while they were still undecided as to which of them had the better claim, the election was carried by a newspaper editor from Caen.

Then the reaction began. Gorju and his friends appeared before the Municipal Council and demanded work. The Mayor trembled, his voice failed him; and none of his colleagues showed any greater presence of mind. At last, word was sent to the deputation that shops of charity were being prepared.

‘Charity? Thank you!’ cried Gorju. ‘Down with the aristocrats! We want the right to work.’

Pécuchet eventually appeared on the scene, and attempted to make a speech, but was removed with some risk of personal violence, from which he was rescued by Gorju. Père Gouy, the tenant who farmed for Bouvard, interpreted the ‘right to work’ after a fashion of his own, and proceeding to Madame Bordin’s garden with a cart-load of manure, proceed to dig up her lawn. Bouvard intervened in defence of the widow, who retained the manure as compensation for damage done.

The public workshops only lasted a week. Gorju went away. The National Guard began to display great activity, little discipline and no courage. A few weeks later, they arrested a man who was found lurking about the place with a gun, and who proved to be Gorju in a state of complete destitution. He was sent to prison, hurt, because Pécuchet did not interfere on his behalf.

On the 10th of December all the inhabitants of Chavi-  
gnolles voted for Bonaparte.

‘The six millions of votes chilled Pécuchet’s affection for the People,—and he and Bouvard studied the question of universal suffrage.

‘Belonging to everybody, it must be devoid of intelligence. One ambitious man will always guide it, the others will follow like a flock, the electors not being obliged even to know how to read : that is why, according to Pécuchet, there was so much dishonesty in the election of the President.

“None whatever,” replied Bouvard ; “I incline rather to believe in the folly of the People. Think of all those who buy quack medicine ! These fools form the bulk of the electors, and we submit to their will. Why can one not make an annual income of three thousand francs out of rabbits ? Because too close crowding is a cause of death. In the same way, by the mere fact of the existence of a crowd, the germs of inanity which it contains are developed, and incalculable consequences are the result.”’

Soon after this the trees of liberty were generally uprooted. ‘Bouvard saw with his own eyes the fragments of his poplar on a wheelbarrow. They served to warm the policemen, and the stem was offered to the curé,—who had never however blessed it ! What a piece of derision !’

However, there was one person in Chavignolles who did not veer round with the prevailing wind :—

‘The schoolmaster did not conceal his way of thinking.

‘Bouvard and Pécuchet congratulated him on it one day when they were passing his door.

‘The next day he called on them. At the end of the week they returned his visit.

‘The daylight was fading, the boys had just gone away, and the schoolmaster in his shirt-sleeves swept the court. His wife, with a muslin cap on, was suckling a child. A little girl hid herself behind her petticoats ; a hideous brat was playing on the ground at her feet ; the water from the washing which she was doing in the kitchen flowed in front of the house.

“You see,” said the schoolmaster, “how the Government treats us !” and at once he began to inveigh against the influ-

ences of capital. It should be democratised ; matter should be emancipated.

“ I ask for nothing better ! ” said Pécuchet. “ At least they ought to have recognised the right to assistance.”

“ Yet another right ! ” said Bouvard. “ Nonsense ! The provisional government had been weak in not ordaining fraternity.”

“ Then try to establish it ! ”

‘ As the daylight was gone, Petit roughly ordered his wife to place a light in his study.

‘ On the plaster walls the lithograph portraits of the orators of the Left were fastened with pins. A small bookcase stood over a deal writing-desk. For seats, one had a chair, a stool, and an old soap-box ; he affected to laugh. But poverty hollowed his cheeks, and his narrow temples indicated a ram-like obstinacy, an unmanageable pride. He would never give way.

‘ “ Besides, you may see what keeps me up ! ”

‘ It was a pile of newspapers on a shelf, and he set forth in fevered words his articles of faith : disarmament of troops, abolition of magistrates, equality of salaries, a mean level by which one would obtain the golden age, under the form of the Republic, with a dictator at its head, the right sort of fellow to do the whole thing for you soundly !

‘ Then he reached down a bottle of liqueur and three glasses, in order to propose a toast to the hero, the immortal victim, Maximilian !

‘ On the threshold appeared the black cassock of the parson.

‘ Having greeted the company cheerfully, he addressed the schoolmaster, and said to him, almost in a whisper :

‘ “ How is our little matter of the Saint Joseph getting on ? ”

‘ “ They have given nothing,” replied the schoolmaster.

‘ “ That is your fault ! ”

‘ “ I have done what I could ! ”

‘ “ Really ? ”

‘ Bouvard and Pécuchet discreetly rose. Petit made them sit down again, and addressing himself to the curé :—

‘ “ Is that all ? ”

‘ The Abbé Jeufroy hesitated ; then with a smile, which softened his reprimand :

“It is thought that you neglect sacred history, somewhat.”

“Oh! sacred history!” interrupted Bouvard.

“What fault have you to find with it, sir?”

“I—none. Only perhaps there are more useful things to be learned than the story of Jonah and the Kings of Israel.”

“You are at liberty to do as you please!” replied the priest drily.

‘And without heeding the strangers, or perhaps because of them, he went on:

“The catechism hour is too short!”

‘Petit shrugged his shoulders.

“Pray attend! You will lose your boarders!”

‘The ten francs a month paid by these pupils was the better part of his income. But the cassock exasperated him:

“So much the worse; take your revenge!”

“A man of my character never takes vengeance,” said the priest without emotion. “Only I would remind you that the law of the 15th of March assigns the superintendence of primary instruction to us.”

“Ah! I know it only too well,” cried the schoolmaster. “It also appertains to colonels of police! Why not to the local policeman?—then the system would be complete!”

‘And he sank down on the bench, biting his fingers, holding his anger, choked by the sensation of his want of power.

‘The ecclesiastic touched him lightly on the shoulder.

“I did not wish to grieve you, friend! Quiet yourself! A little reason!

“Here is Easter close upon us! I hope that you will set an example by communicating with the rest?”

“That is too much! I—I submit to such absurdities?”

‘In the presence of this blasphemy the curé turned pale. His eyeballs gleamed. His jaw quivered:

“Hold your tongue, unhappy man, hold your tongue!—and his wife is the woman who takes charge of the church linen!”

“Well—what? What has she done?”

“She never comes to mass! Like you, for that matter.”

“Well! A schoolmaster is not cashiered for a thing like that!”

“He can be dismissed.”



‘The priest said no more. He was at the end of the room, in the shadow. Petit with his chin on his chest was thinking.

‘They would arrive at the other end of France, their last penny swallowed by the journey, and they would again find over there under different names the same curé, the same superintendent, the same prefect; all of them up to the Minister were like the rings of the same crushing chain! He had already received a warning, others would follow. Then? and in a kind of hallucination he saw himself walking on along a high-road, a bag on his back, those whom he loved beside him, his hand stretched out towards a post-chaise!

‘At that moment his wife was taken with a fit of coughing in the kitchen, the last-born baby began to scream, and the boy was crying.

‘“Poor children!” said the priest in a gentle voice.

‘Then the father burst into sobs.

‘“Yes, yes! anything that is wanted!”

‘“I count upon it,” said the Curé.

‘And having made the usual bow:—

‘“Gentlemen, I wish you a very good-evening.”

‘The schoolmaster remained with his face in his hands. He rejected Bouvard’s advances.

‘“No! leave me! I would like to die! I am a poor creature.”

‘The two friends returned to their house congratulating themselves upon their independence. The power of the Clergy terrified them.

‘The reaction against the Republic continuing, “three million electors found themselves excluded from universal suffrage. The caution-money of newspapers was raised, censorship of the press re-established. There was a feeling against the romances in the daily papers. Classical philosophy was considered dangerous. The middle classes preached the dogma of material interests, and the people seemed satisfied.’

At this juncture M. de Faverges thought it expedient to give a political lunch, at which Bouvard was shocked by the contrast between the magnificence of the apartments in which they met and the meanness of the conversation.

Having overheard M. de Faverges remarking to the Abbé Jeufroy, 'We must re-establish obedience. Authority dies, if it is discussed! The right divine, there is nothing but that!' the friends began to study the works of political theorists, beginning with the Englishmen Filmer and Hobbes, and descending, through Rousseau, St. Simon, Fourier and others, to Auguste Comte; they found that all the social reformers clamoured for a vigorous despotism interfering with the most minute details of domestic life. All reduced their own systems to an absurdity.

"These documents distressed Pécuchet. In the evening at dinner he said:—

"That there are absurdities in the works of the Utopians I admit; none the less, they deserve our love. The hideousness of the world distressed them, and they have all suffered in the effort to make it more beautiful. Bethink yourself of Thomas More decapitated, Campanilla put to the torture seven times, Buonarotti with a chain round his neck, Saint-Simon perishing in want, many others. They might have lived lives of tranquillity: but no! they trod their path with their heads to heaven like heroes.'

""Do you think that the world will be changed," replied Bouvard, "thanks to the theories of some gentleman?"

"What then!" said Pécuchet, "it is time to give up squatting in egotism! Let us look for the best system!"

"Then you count upon finding it?"

"Certainly!"

"You?"

'And in the fit of laughing which seized Bouvard his shoulders and his stomach heaved together. Redder than the jam on the table, his napkin under his arm, he kept repeating . . . "ha! ha! ha!" in an irritating manner.

'Pécuchet went out of the room slamming the door behind him.

'The housekeeper called for him all over the house,—and at last he was found in the depths of his own apartment, in an

easy-chair without fire or candle, and his cap over his eyes. He was not ill, but was giving himself up to his own reflections.

‘Their quarrel over, they recognised that their studies wanted a sound foundation,—political economy. So they inquired into supply and demand, capital and rent, imposts and prohibition.’

The *coup d’État* shortly afterwards pleased everybody; even Petit rejoiced that Thiers and other deputies were in prison.

‘The butchery on the Boulevards won the approbation of Chavignolles. No mercy for the conquered, no pity for the victims! As soon as one revolts one is a criminal.

“Let us thank Providence!” said the curé, “and after Providence, Louis Bonaparte. He is surrounding himself with the men of most distinction! The Comte de Faverges will be made a Senator!”

‘The next day they had a visit from the chief of the police.

‘These gentlemen had talked a good deal. He pledged them to hold their tongues.

“Would you like to know my opinion?” said Pécuchet. “Since the middle class are savage, the artisans jealous, the priests servile,—and the people in the end puts up with all tyrants, provided it is allowed to keep its muzzle in the feeding-trough, Napoleon has done rightly! Let him gag the rabble and exterminate it! That will never be more than it deserves for its hatred of right, its cowardice, its ineptitude, its blindness.”

A still worse disappointment awaited the friends. They began to grow tired of one another.

Bouvard began to reflect that he might do worse than marry again, and seriously paid his court to Madame Bordin. A series of accidents inflamed Pécuchet with a violent passion for Mélie, the maid, who had been recommended by Gorju. But it turned out that Madame Bordin cared nothing for Bouvard, her affections being really fixed upon a particular

meadow in his farm, and when he refused her this on the occasion of drawing up the marriage-settlement, she broke out into insults, spoke contemptuously of his constitution, his pot-belly ; while Pécuchet discovered too late that Mélie must have had other admirers than himself.

The disillusionment brought the friends together again ; they repeated all the commonplaces that have ever been said to the disadvantage of women ; and consoled themselves with a course of hydropathy and gymnastics under the guidance of the Manual of Amoros ; and with the results which usually attend upon the athletics of the middle-aged.

At this period some spirit-rappers descended upon the Château de Faverges, and from thence their practices spread through the village ; and by a natural sequence directed the attention of Pécuchet to animal magnetism ; he read the *Magnetiser's Guide* by Montacabère, and imparted his discoveries to Bouvard. Its therapeutic powers particularly interested them, and the successful results of an experiment upon their housekeeper tempted them to a wider extension of their skill ; the fame of Bouvard even spread to Falaise.

Soon their garden was crowded with patients ; a woman with a tumour among them ; a public demonstration was given of the effect of a magnetised tree, but in spite of some encouraging symptoms, 'Bouvard and Pécuchet had not on the whole succeeded. Had that to do with the temperature, or the smell of tobacco, or the Abbé Jeufroy's umbrella, which was ornamented with copper, a metal unfavourable to the emission of the fluid ?'

Spiritualism succeeded magnetism, and Pécuchet foundered his intellect in the endeavour to discover what there was beautiful in the revelations of Swedenborg, which appeared to Bouvard a fool's dream ; but he was not proof against the charms of magic, and employed the methods of one Dupotet



to raise a spirit called Béchét with such effect that they frightened their old housekeeper out of her wits. She left them that evening for good.

For a time their extravagances became wilder each day; they took a divining-wand, sought for hidden treasure; mesmerised fowls; Pécuchet invited a condition of ecstasy, and found that it depended upon an external and material circumstance, the bright under-surface of the peak of his cap. This led them to study metaphysics, ethics, and at last Bouvard did not even believe in matter.

‘The certainty that nothing exists (deplorable though it be) is none the less a certainty. Few persons are capable of having it. This transcendental position inspired them with pride, and they would have liked to make a display. An opportunity offered.

‘One morning on their way to buy tobacco they saw a crowd in front of Langlois’ door. They were surrounding the Falaise omnibus, and there was a great talk of one Touache, a galley-slave, who roamed about the country. The conductor had met him at Croix-Verte, between two policemen, and the good folk of Chavignolles breathed a sigh of deliverance.

‘Girbal and the Captain remained on the green, then the justice of the peace arrived, anxious to have information, and M. Marescot, the notary, in a velvet cap and list slippers.

‘Langlois invited them to honour his shop with their presence. They would be more at their ease, and in spite of the customers and the noise of the bell these gentlemen continued to discuss the delinquencies of Touache.

“My goodness!” said Bouvard, “he had bad instincts, there you are!”

“They are conquered by virtue,” replied the notary.

“But if one has no virtue?”

‘And Bouvard absolutely denied free-will.

“Yet,” said the Captain, “I can do what I like! I am free, for instance, to move my leg!”

“No, sir, for you have a motive for moving it!”

The Captain sought an answer, failed to find one. But Girbal let off this missile :—

“A Republican speaking against liberty ! that is funny.”

“A real joke !” said Langlois.

Bouvard interrupted him :

“Whence comes it that you do not give your fortune to the poor ?”

‘The grocer cast his eyes round his shop with an anxious air.

“Eh, why ? I am not such a fool ! I keep it for myself !”

“If you were St. Vincent de Paul you would act differently, because you would have his character. You obey your own. Therefore you are not free.”

“It is a quibble,” replied the company in chorus.

Bouvard did not budge from his position, and pointing to the scales upon the counter :—

“They will remain motionless, so long as one of the pans is empty. It is the same with the will ; and the oscillation of the balance between two weights, which seem equal, represents the work of our mind, when it deliberates upon motives, till the moment, when the stronger has its way, determines.

“All that,” said Girbal, “does nothing for Touâche, and does not prevent him from being a thoroughly vicious rascal.”

‘Pécuchet took up the word :—

“Vices are natural properties, like inundations, storms.”

‘The notary stopped him, and raising himself on tip-toe at every word, said :—

“I think your system complete in its immorality. It gives an opening to all excesses, excuses crimes, makes the guilty innocent.”

“Certainly,” said Bouvard. “The unfortunate being who follows his appetites is as much in his rights as the honest man who listens to reason.” ✓

“Do not defend monsters.”

“Why monsters ? When a man is born blind, an idiot, a homicide, it seems to us contrary to order, as if order were known to us, as if nature worked to an end !”

‘Then you dispute Providence ?’

“Yes, I dispute it !”

“Consider history rather,” cried Pécuchet. “Recall the

assassinations of kings, the massacre of peoples, the dissensions in families, the sorrows of individuals."

"And at the same time," added Bouvard, for they mutually heated one another, "this Providence of yours cares for the little birds, and makes the claws of crayfish grow again. Ah,—if you understand by Providence a law which rules everything, I am with you, and then!"

"Yet, sir," said the notary, "there are principles!"

"What is your song now? A science, according to Condillac, is so much the better, as it has no need of them! They only epitomise acquired knowledge, and refer us precisely to those notions which are open to question."

"Have you, like us," went on Pécuchet, "searched, explored the secrets of metaphysics?"

"That is true, gentlemen, that is true."

"And the company broke up.

"But Coulon, drawing them aside, told them in a fatherly tone that he was not strict, certainly, he even detested the Jesuits. However, he did not go so far as they did! Oh no,—certainly not;—and at the corner of the green they passed in front of the Captain, who was lighting his pipe, grumbling:—

"Still I do what I like, damn it all!"

"Bouvard and Pécuchet produced their abominable paradoxes on other occasions. They cast a doubt upon the honesty of men, the chastity of women, the intelligence of government, the good sense of the people,—in a word, undermined the foundations.

"Foureau lost his temper over it, and threatened them with prison if they went on with such discourse.

"The evidence of their superiority was galling. As they supported immoral propositions they must be immoral, calumnies were invented.

"Then an unfortunate faculty was developed in their minds; that of seeing inanity and being unable to tolerate it any longer.

"Insignificant things saddened them; the advertisements in the papers, the profile of a middle-class person, a stupid remark heard by chance.

"Thinking over what was said in their own village, and that there were from them to the Antipodes other Coulons, other

Marescots, other Foureaus, they felt as it were the heaviness of the whole earth weighing them down.

‘They ceased to go out, to receive anybody.’

Death itself ceased to be a reality to them, and their existence became so insupportable that Pécuchet took two ropes from the gymnastic apparatus, made a slip-knot at the end of each, and slung them over the cross-beam of the attic roof with two chairs, one under each.

On the 24th of December, just before midnight, a quarrel broke out; Pécuchet rushed out to the barn, followed by Bouvard; they each jumped on to one of the chairs, and prepared to adjust the fatal noose, when Pécuchet remembered that their wills were not yet made. Looking through the window they saw lights in the churchyard: it was the midnight mass of Christmas Eve.

Curiosity drove them to join the service; at the end of it the Host was elevated by the priest as high as possible. ‘Then there burst out a song of gladness, inviting all the world to the feet of the King of Angels. Bouvard and Pécuchet involuntarily joined in, and felt, as it were, a new dawn rising in their souls.’

The next day it seemed to them that the execution of their rash purpose had been suspended by a miraculous intervention, and they resolved to betake themselves to pious reading.

### PART III.

‘One day they went to mass, then returned. It was a distraction at the end of the week. The Count and Countess de Faverges bowed to them in the distance; the thing was remarked. The justice of the peace said to them, closing his eyelids, “Perfect, I commend you!” All the ladies of the place now began to send them holy bread.



‘Abbé Jeufroy paid them a visit ; they returned it ; an intimacy grew up ; and the priest never talked of religion.

‘They were astonished at this reserve ; so much so that Pécuchet asked him casually how a man should set about getting faith.

“ ‘First observe the duties of religion.’”

‘They did so ; the one with hope, the other with mistrust, Bouvard being convinced that he would never be pious. For a month he followed all the services regularly, but, unlike Pécuchet, did not wish to condemn himself to fasting.’

None the less, when he impiously ordered a beef-steak on Good Friday, he found himself unable to eat it ; the habits learned in childhood were too strong for him.

Pécuchet, as might have been anticipated, took his devotion very seriously ; he tried to overcome his passionate temper, to cultivate humility, became so chaste that he averted his gaze from his own limbs when he was undressed, and wore bathing-drawers when he went to bed. One day Bouvard surprised him half-stripped, in the act of scourging himself.

The friends passed under the special protection of Mademoiselle Reine, the curé’s housekeeper ; she introduced them to one Gouttman, a purveyor of pious articles ; and they were not long in bartering the contents of their museum for candelabra, portable altars, pictures of saints, a cradleful of hay, and a cork cathedral.

‘Pécuchet adopted the ecclesiastical style, doubtless owing to his intimacy with the curé. He had his smile, his voice, and a chilly way of slipping his hands up to the wrists into his sleeves.’ He groaned over his meals, having read in a manual of devotion that it was becoming to do so ; and finally, in order to acquire the gift of perseverance, made a pilgrimage, in company with Bouvard, to the shrine of Notre Dame de la Délivrande, where there was a miraculous statue,

‘discovered about 1112 by a sheep, which indicated the place where it was by tapping on the grass with its foot, and on that spot Count Baldwin erected a sanctuary.’

In spite of the miraculous powers of Notre Dame de la Délivrande, Bouvard gained little from the expedition, which, however, brought him into contact once more with his old friend Barberou, who appeared at an inn at which the friends stayed, in the capacity of wine-merchant’s traveller.

On their return they were invited to the annual dinner which Abbé Jeufroy was in the habit of giving to his colleagues ; it began at two o’clock in the afternoon, and ended at eleven o’clock at night.

‘They drank perry, produced puns. Abbé Pruneau improvised an acrostic. M. Rougon showed some card-tricks, and a young curate, Cerpet, sang a little romance which touched the borders of gallantry.

Before long the friends decided to take the Holy Communion, which they did on the Sunday after the annual confirmation. They were rewarded by an invitation to the house of the Comte de Faverges.

On their return from church they found a book awaiting them ; it was the *Examen du Christianisme* by Louis Hervieu. Barberou had sent it. Pécuchet put it out of sight. Bouvard had no wish to make its acquaintance.

‘He had been told that the Sacrament would change him ; for several days he was on the look-out for signs of budding in his conscience. But he continued the same, and a painful amazement took possession of him. M. Jeufroy, while comforting him, recommended the Catechism of Abbé Gaume.’

Pécuchet, on the other hand, became highly devout, sang psalms as he walked up and down the passage ; stopped the

natives of Chavignolles, argued with them, endeavoured to convert them. They laughed in his face and called him a hypocrite. 'It was now thought that the friends were going too far.'

'Pécuchet took refuge with the mystic authors, Saint Theresa, Jean de la Croix, Louis de Grenade, Simpoli, and of the more modern, Monseigneur Chaillot. Instead of the sublimities, which he expected, he only encountered platitudes, a very slack style, chilly images, and plenty of comparisons taken from the lapidary's shop.

'He learned, however, that there is an active purgation and a passive purgation, an internal vision and an external vision, four kinds of prayers, nine excellencies in love, six degrees in humility, and that the wound of the soul is not very different from a spiritual robbery.

'Some points embarrassed him.

'“Since the flesh is cursed, how is it that one is bound to thank God for the benefit of existence? What mean is to be kept between the fear indispensable to salvation, and hope, which is no less so? Where is the sign of grace?” etc.

'The answers of M. Jeufroy were simple :

'“Do not worry yourself. In wishing to get to the bottom of everything one runs on a dangerous slope.”

'The Catechism of Perseverance by Gaume had disgusted Bouvard to such a degree that he took up Louis Hervieu's volume. It was a summary of modern exegesis forbidden by the Government. Barberou had bought it as a Republican.

'It awoke doubts in Bouvard's mind, and, to begin with, on original sin. “If God created man peccable, He ought not to punish him ; and evil is anterior to the fall, because there were already volcanoes, savage animals. In a word, this dogma upsets my notions of justice !”

'“What would you have ?” said the curé, “it is one of those truths about which every one is agreed, without being able to supply proofs ; and we ourselves visit the crimes of their fathers upon the children. Thus morality and law justify this ordinance of Providence, which is found in nature.”

'Bouvard shook his head. He also doubted hell.

“For every punishment should look to the improvement of the guilty one, which is impossible with an eternal penalty; and how many are suffering it! Just think, all the ancients, the Jews, Mussulmans, idolaters, heretics, and children dead unbaptized, those children created by God, and with what object! To punish them for a sin which they have not committed!”

“Such is the opinion of St. Augustine,” added the curé, “and St. Fulgentius includes even the fœtus in damnation. The Church, it is true, has come to no decision on this point. One remark, however: it is not God but the sinner who condemns himself, and the offence being infinite, since God is infinite the punishment should be infinite. Is that all, sir?”

“Explain me the Trinity,” said Bouvard.

“With pleasure. Let us take a comparison: the three sides of a triangle, or rather our own soul, which contains being, knowing, and willing; what one calls a faculty in man is a person in God. There is your mystery.”

“Yes, but the three sides of a triangle are not each one of them the triangle: these three faculties of the soul do not form three souls, and your persons of the Trinity are three Gods.”

“Blasphemy!”

“Then there is only one person, one God, one substance affected in three manners!”

“Let us adore without understanding,” said the curé.

“Good,” said Bouvard.

He was afraid of being taken for an atheist, of falling into disfavour at the big house.

They used to go there now three times a week about five o'clock in the winter, and the cup of tea warmed them. The Count recalled the style of the ancient court by his manners; the Countess, placid and stout, showed on all points great discernment; and their daughter, Mademoiselle Yolande, was the type of the young person, the angel of the “Keepsake”; and Madame de Noares, their companion, was like Pécuchet, having his pointed nose.

She had converted Gorju, and secured the Count's protection for two vagabond children that she had picked up.



Their father was the convict Touache, a fact which she concealed.

‘When M. Jeufoiy used to go to the château the two brats were sent for; he used to question them, then gave a lecture, into which he used to put some elevation on account of the audience.

‘Once when he had discoursed on the Patriarchs, Bouvard, on the way home along with him and Pécuchet, abused them violently.

“Jacob is distinguished by his rascalities, David by his murders, Solomon by his debaucheries.”

‘The Abbé replied to him that one must look further than that. The sacrifice of Abraham is the type of the Passion; Jacob another type of the Messiah, like Joseph, like the brazen serpent, like Moses.

“Do you believe,” said Bouvard, “that he composed the Pentateuch?”

“Yes, without doubt.”

“Yet his death is recorded in it; the same remark applies to Joshua; and as for the Judges, the author informs us that at the period whose history he is writing Israel had not as yet kings. The work then was written under the kings. The prophets also amaze me.”

“Now he is going to deny the prophets.”

“Not at all! But their heated imagination saw Jehovah under different forms, that of a fire, of a bush, of an old man, of a dove; and they were not certain of revelation since they are always asking for a sign.”

“Ah, and you have found these fine things?”

“In Spinoza.”

‘At this word the curé jumped.

“Have you read him?”

“Heaven forbid! And yet, sir, science . . .”

“Sir, one is not scientific if one is not a Christian.”

‘The subject of science inspired him with sarcasms:—“Will it make a single blade of corn grow, your science? What do we know?” said he.

‘But he did know that the world was created for us; he knew

that archangels are above angels; he knew that the human body will rise again, such as it was at thirty years of age.

‘His sacerdotal confidence maddened Bouvard, who, mistrusting Louis Hervieu, wrote to Varlot; and Pécuchet, better informed, asked M. Jeufroy for explanations of the Holy Scriptures.

‘The six days of Genesis mean six great epochs. The theft of the precious jewels taken by the Jews from the Egyptians must be taken to signify intellectual riches,—the arts, whose secrets they had stolen. Isaiah did not completely disrobe himself, *nudus* in Latin meaning only to the hips; thus Virgil advises us to strip to plough, and that writer would never have given a precept contrary to decency! Ezekiel devouring a book has nothing extraordinary in it; do not we talk of devouring a pamphlet, a paper?

“But if we see metaphors everywhere, what will become of the facts?” The Abbé none the less asserted that they were real.

‘This manner of understanding them appeared to Pécuchet disloyal. He pushed his researches further, and brought a note on the contradictions in the Bible. “Where,” he asked, “was the inspiration?”

“The greater the reason for admitting it,” replied M. Jeufroy, smiling. “Impostors require consistency, honest writers do not trouble about it. In difficulty let us have recourse to the Church! She is infallible always.”

“Whence comes her infallibility?”

“The Councils of Bâle and of Constance attribute it to the Councils. But the Councils are often at variance—for example, the one which passed a verdict for Athanasius and for Arius; those of Florence and the Lateran attribute it to the Pope. But Adrian vi. declares that the Pope can make a mistake like any other man.”

“Quibbles! All that has nothing to do with the permanence of dogma.”

“Louis Hervieu’s work points out its variations. Baptism formerly was reserved for adults, extreme unction was not a sacrament till the ninth century, the real presence was decreed in the eighth, purgatory recognised in the fifteenth, the immaculate conception is an affair of yesterday.”

‘M. Jeufroy secretly consulted his friend Pruneau, who sought for proofs for him in the authors. A war of erudition ensued; and, stimulated by his self-esteem, Pécuchet became transcendently mythological.

‘He compared the Virgin to Isis, the Eucharist to the *homa* of the Persians, Bacchus to Moses, Noah’s Ark to the ship of Xithurus;—these resemblances proved for him the identity of religions.

‘But there cannot be several religions since there is only one God,—and when he was at the end of his arguments the man of the cassock used to cry, “It is a mystery!”

‘What does that word mean? Deficiency of knowledge; very good. But if it indicates a thing, the mere statement of which involves a contradiction, it is a folly; and Pécuchet would not leave M. Jeufroy. He surprised him in his garden, awaited him at the confessional, hurried him into the sacristy.’

The priest used to devise plans of escape, but he was not always successful; and one day Pécuchet succeeded in intercepting him on the high-road, and entangling him in a long discussion on the subject of persecutions and martyrdoms; a very heavy shower of rain came on; they had only one umbrella between them, and there they stood belly to belly under its protection, shaken by the violence alike of the storm and their altercation. In the end Pécuchet claimed the title of martyr for the Protestants killed in Ireland and Belgium by the Catholics, but he was met by the statement that there are no martyrs outside the Church.

“One word: if the value of a martyrdom depends upon the doctrine, how could it serve to demonstrate the value of the doctrine?”

‘They parted at the priest’s house, who could only say: “I am sorry for you; in real truth, I am sorry for you!”’

Meanwhile the visits to the château were continued, and Madame de Noares interested herself in the conversion of Pécuchet; she secretly sewed a medal of St. Joseph into the lining of his cap, that saint being particularly favourable to conversions.

‘ Her time was spent in writing letters, in visiting the poor, in dissolving irregular cohabitations, in distributing photographs of the Sacred Heart. A gentleman was to send her some “martyr paste,” a mixture of paschal wax and the human dust taken from the catacombs, and which is used in plasters or pilules in desperate cases. She promised some of it to Pécuchet.

‘ He seemed shocked at such materialism.

‘ In the evening a footman from the château brought him a bundle of little books, relating pious speeches of the great Napoleon, smart remarks made by clergymen in public-houses, horrible deaths that had happened to atheists. Madame de Noares knew all that by heart, and a quantity of miracles as well.

‘ She related stupid ones, aimless miracles, as if God had worked them to mystify the world. Her own grandmother had shut up some dried plums in a cupboard covered with a cloth, and when the cupboard was opened a year later, thirteen of them were seen on the cloth, forming a cross.

‘ “Explain me that !”

‘ This was her phrase after her stories, which she maintained with the obstinacy of a pack-ass ; for the rest a good-natured woman and of a playful humour.

‘ Once, however, she “forgot herself.”

‘ Bouvard was protesting against the miracle of Pezilla : a jam-pot in which consecrated wafers had been hidden during the Revolution gilded itself.

‘ “Perhaps there was a little yellow colour at the bottom coming from damp !”

‘ “No, certainly not ! I tell you again, no ! The gilding was caused by the contact with the Eucharist.”

‘ And she gave the attestations of Bishops in proof. “It is, they say, like a buckler, a—a palladium over the diocese of Perpignan. Ask M. Jeufroy !”

‘ Bouvard could not stand it any longer, and having looked up his Louis Hervieu, took Pécuchet with him.

‘ The ecclesiastic was finishing dinner. Reine offered chairs, and on a sign she went and fetched two liqueur-glasses, which she filled with Rosolio.

‘ After this Bouvard revealed what brought him.

‘ The Abbé did not reply frankly.



“Everything is possible with God, and miracles are a proof of religion.”

“There are, however, laws.”

“That is neither here nor there. He disturbs them to instruct, correct.”

“How do you know if He disturbs them?” continued Bouvard. “So long as nature follows her routine one does not think of her, but in an extraordinary phenomenon we see the hand of God.”

“It may be there,” said the ecclesiastic; “and when an event is proved by the evidence of witnesses?”

“The witnesses spoil the whole thing, for there are false miracles.”

“The priest turned red.

“Doubtless, sometimes.”

“How are we to distinguish them from the true ones? And if the true ones given in proof themselves need proof, why perform them?”

Reine intervened, and preaching like her master, said that we must obey.

“Life is a passage, but death is eternal.”

“In short,” added Bouvard, rolling the Rosolio in his mouth, “the miracles of other days are no better demonstrated than those of to-day; analogous reasonings defend those of the Christians and of the Pagans.”

“The curé threw the fork on the table.

“Those were false, yet again! no miracles outside the Church!”

“Stop,” said Pécuchet, “the same argument as for the martyrs: the doctrine is supported by the facts, and the facts by the doctrine.”

M. Jeufroy after drinking a glass of water resumed: “Even while you deny them, you believe in them. The world that twelve fishermen converted—there—that seems to me a fine miracle!”

“Not at all.”

Pécuchet accounted for it in quite another manner.

“Monotheism comes from the Hebrews, the Trinity from India, the Word is in Plato, the Virgin-mother in Asia.”

‘Never mind ! M. Jeufroy clung to the supernatural, would not allow that Christianity could have humanly the smallest reason for its existence, although he saw anticipations or deformations of it in all nations. The impious raillery of the eighteenth century he could have put up with ; but modern criticism with its politeness exasperated him.

‘“ I prefer the atheist who blasphemes to the sceptic who cavils.”

‘Then he looked at them with an air of bravado as if to dismiss them.

‘Pécuchet went away in low spirits. He had hoped for the reconciliation of faith and reason.’

In spite of his wavering devotion, Pécuchet still continued to visit the Faverges family, and was treated to edifying remarks on things in general by the Count, whose favourite phrase was, ‘It ought not to be allowed.’

‘Social economy, fine arts, literature, history, scientific doctrines, he decided on all in his quality as Christian, and head of a family ; and might God be pleased to grant, that in this respect the government might show the same severity as he displayed in his family ! Power alone is the judge of the dangers of science ; spread too widely, it inspires the people with deadly ambitions. It was more happy, was this poor people, when the nobility and the bishops tempered the absolutism of the King. Now the manufacturers work it to their advantage. It is on the point of falling into slavery.’

There visited at the château in these days one M. Mahurot, the prospective son-in-law of the Count ; one day on arriving Bouvard and Pécuchet found the mayor waiting for M. Jeufroy to fix the date of the marriage, which was to take place at the mayor’s office before the ceremony at the church, in order to show contempt for the civil marriage.

Foureau tried to defend it. The Count and Hurel attacked it. What was a municipal function in comparison with a priesthood ? and the baron would not have believed himself

married if the ceremony had only taken place in the presence of a three-coloured scarf.

"Bravo," said M. Jeufroy, coming in ; " marriage being established by Jesus."

'Pécuchet stopped him : " In which Gospel ? In the Apostolic times they thought so meanly of it that Tertullian compares it to adultery."

"Oh—pray."

"Certainly ! and it is not a sacrament ! A sacrament demands a sign. Show me the sign in marriage !"

'In vain did the curé reply that it was an image of the alliance of God with the Church. " You do not understand even Christianity ! and law."

" Law preserves its stamp," said M. de Faverges ; " without it, law would authorise polygamy !"

'A voice replied : " Where would the harm of that be ?"

'It was Bouvard, half hidden by a curtain.

"One may have several wives, like the patriarchs, the Mormons, the Mussulmans, and none the less be an honest man !"

"Never !" cried the priest ; " honesty consists in rendering that which is due. We owe homage to God. Now, he who is not a Christian is not honest."

"As honest as others," said Bouvard.

'The Count thinking that he saw in this retort an attack on religion, exalted it. Religion had freed the slaves.

'Bouvard cited quotations proving the contrary.

"Saint Paul recommended them to obey their masters, like Jesus. Saint Ambrose calls slavery a gift of God."

"Leviticus, Exodus, and the Councils sanctioned it. Bossuet classes it among the rights of nations—and Monseigneur Bouvier approves of it."

'The Count objected that Christianity, none the less, had developed civilisation.

"And idleness, in making a virtue of poverty !"

"Yet, sir—the morality of the Gospels."

"Well, well, not so moral after all ! The labourers of the last hour are paid as much as those of the first. To him who hath is given, and from him who hath not is taken away. As

for the precept about receiving blows without returning them, and letting one's self be robbed, it encourages the bully, the coward, and the rascal."

'The scandal redoubled when Pécuchet had declared that he liked Buddhism as well.

'The priest burst into a laugh. "Buddhism."

'Madame de Noares raised her arms: "Buddhism!"

"What . . . Buddhism!" repeated the Count.

"Do you know it?" said Pécuchet to M. Jeufroy, who was in a fury.

"Well—learn it: better than Christianity, and before Christianity it recognised the nothingness of earthly things. Its practice is austere, its faithful servants more numerous than all the Christians, and as for incarnation, Vishnu has not had one, but nine! So judge."

"Traveller's lies," said Madame de Noares.

"Backed up by the freemasons," added the curé.

'And all speaking at once: "Come now—Come—Go on! Very fine!—I think that absurd—Impossible—" Insomuch that Pécuchet lost his temper, and declared he would turn Buddhist.

"You are insulting Christian ladies!" said the baron. Madame de Noares sank into an arm-chair. The Countess and Yolande held their peace. The Count rolled his eyes. Hurel was waiting for orders. The Abbé read his breviary to control himself.'

Shortly after this scene the friends withdrew along with Foureau, the mayor still smarting under the insult offered to civil marriage.

The children of Touache, having proved intractable, had been handed over to him to be placed in a reformatory. The friends begged to be appointed guardians to these children; to educate them would be a new interest in life; visions of affectionate young creatures growing into grace under their care made Bouvard and Pécuchet look forward sentimentally to the future.

Foureau, to spite the Faverges family, promised to send the children.



‘On returning home they found Marcel (their man-servant) at the foot of the staircase, under the Madonna, on his knees, praying with fervour. His head thrown back, his eyes half-closed, his hare-lip parted, he had the appearance of a Fakir in ecstasy.

“What a brute beast!” said Bouvard.

“Why? He perhaps is witnessing things which you would envy him, if you could see them. Are there not two totally distinct worlds? The subject of a method of reasoning has less value than the manner of reasoning. What does the belief matter? The important thing is to believe.”

‘Such were the objections of Pécuchet to the remark of Bouvard.’

Victor and Victorine duly arrived; as also did several books on education, from which Bouvard and Pécuchet learned that one must banish every metaphysical idea and follow the natural development according to the experimental method.

Bouvard, as might have been expected, took charge of the girl, Pécuchet of the boy.

Reading and writing proved to be things that are not learned as a matter of course; the children yawned, were irritable, fell asleep. ‘Perhaps they were ill? Too severe a tension injures the youthful brain.’

As soon as the children felt at home they made havoc of the garden. It was necessary to provide them with amusements. Rousseau recommends that the tutor should teach the child to make its own toys; but neither Bouvard nor Pécuchet had the skill necessary to construct the simplest plaything. Fénelon recommends from time to time ‘an innocent conversation.’ They could not by any possibility invent a single one.

By playing on the greediness of the boy and the vanity of the girl they succeeded in inducing them to read and write. But what next?

‘Before proceeding to instruct a child one should know its aptitudes. They can be guessed by means of phrenology. They immersed themselves in it; then wished to verify its assertions upon their own persons. Bouvard had the bump of benevolence to show—imagination, veneration, and amorous energy, commonly called erotism. On the temples of Pécuchet were found philosophy and enthusiasm, joined with a tendency to dissimulation. Such actually were their characters. What surprised them more was to recognise in the one as in the other the inclination to friendship; and charmed at the discovery they embraced one another affectionately.’

In order to gain experience they took to examining the heads of the country-folk on market days; and scandalised the curé by holding their sessions in the porch of the church. ‘Phrenology, according to M. Jeufroy, denied divine omnipotence, and it is indecent to practise it under the shadow of the holy place, in the very face of the altar.’ He drove them away, and they established themselves at the barber’s, where they encountered Vaucorbeil, the doctor. He poured contempt on their new science, which was not supported by anatomy; and yet in his presence they made a correct statement of the characters of three separate individuals. The doctor went out, and slammed the door behind him.

A subsequent examination of the heads of the two children afflicted them; but—

‘One should understand the exact meaning of words; what is called combativeness implies a contempt for death. If it causes homicide, it can also produce heroic rescues. Acquisitiveness includes both the skill of the pickpocket and the ardour of the merchant. Irreverence runs parallel with the spirit of criticism, craft with circumspection. An instinct is always divided into two parts, a bad one and a good one. The first can be destroyed by cultivating the second, and in this way an audacious child, far from being a bandit, will become a general. The coward will have only prudence, the avaricious man economy, the prodigal generosity.’

‘A magnificent dream took possession of them; if they succeeded with the education of their pupils they would found later on an establishment whose aim would be to correct the intelligence, chasten the character, ennoble the heart. They already talked of subscriptions and the buildings.’

The policeman asked them to try the head of his son. The results of the examination were mortifying, and Placquevent comforted himself by remarking that for all that, the boy would do what his father pleased. This led to a conversation on parental rights and filial duties.

‘According to Bouvard and Pécuchet children owed nothing to the authors of their being; their parents, on the other hand, owe them food, education, advice, everything.’

‘The good folk protested against this immoral doctrine. Placquevent was outraged by it, as though by an insult.’

Soon afterwards they found Placquevent cruelly cuffing his son’s head; they reproved him; he replied that he had a right to do what he pleased with his own.

Determined to show an example to other people they set about the instruction of the two children with redoubled activity. Pécuchet demonstrated the meaning of geographical terms with a watering-pot and some sand; but Victor could not remember what he was told. Then Pécuchet tried astronomy; he put an arm-chair in the middle of the room, and began to waltz around it: ‘Imagine that this arm-chair is the sun, and that I am the earth; this is the way it moves.’ Victor looked at him full of consternation. Then he took an orange, pushed a stick through it to represent the poles, then surrounded it with a charcoal line to mark the equator. After this he moved the orange round a candle, making him observe that all parts of the surface were not illuminated simultaneously, which produces the difference of climates; and for that of the seasons he sloped the

orange, for the earth does not stand straight, which is the cause of the equinoxes and the solstice.

Victor had not understood in the least. 'He believed the earth twirls on a long rod, and that the equator is a ring enclosing its circumference.'

Failing with geography, Pécuchet went on to history, but Victor could never learn the names and dates of the kings of France; and his tutor came to the conclusion that history can only be learned by reading a great deal.

Drawing would obviously be a useful accomplishment, and Pécuchet boldly set to work to qualify himself to be drawing-master, but without success; he never knew when to apply the 'master stroke.'

'The sciences can be taught in connection with the commonest objects; say, for example, what wine is made of; and the explanation being given, Victor and Victorine had to repeat it. It was the same with groceries, furniture, illumination; but light for them was only the lamp, and had nothing in common with the spark from a flint, the flame of a candle, the brightness of the moon.

'One day Victorine asked, "What makes wood burn?" Her masters looked at one another in confusion; the theory of combustion was beyond them.'

And then a more serious difficulty showed itself:

'If one starts with facts, the simplest requires too complicated explanations, and if one lays down principles first, one begins with the absolute, with faith.

'How can this be solved? By combining the two methods of instruction, the rational and the empirical; but a double means to one end is the reverse of methodical. So much the worse.

'To initiate them in natural history they tried scientific excursions. "You see," said they, pointing to an ass, a horse, an ox, "beasts with four legs, they are called quadrupeds. Generally speaking, birds have feathers, reptiles scales, and butterflies belong to the class of insects."



‘Then came the turn of botany. Pécuchet wrote this axiom upon the blackboard :—“Every plant has leaves, a calyx, and a corolla, enclosing an ovary or pericarp, which contains the seed.”

‘Then he ordered his pupils to go botanising in the country and pluck the first flowers they found.

‘Victor brought him buttercups, Victorine a tuft of strawberries. He sought in vain for the pericarp.

‘Bouvard, who distrusted his knowledge, rummaged in the whole library and discovered, in the *Redouté des Dames* the picture of an iris, in which the ovaries were not situated in the corolla, but beneath the petals in the stem.

‘There were in the garden some burdocks and lilies of the valley in flower; these rubiaceæ had no calyx; therefore the principle placed on the blackboard was false.

“‘It is an exception,” said Pécuchet.

‘But chance caused them to discover a field-madder in the grass, and it had a calyx.

“‘Oh, come! if the exceptions themselves are not true, where has one any confidence whatever?’”

At this time an educational visit to their farm brought Bouvard into affectionate relations again with Madame Bordin, and there is no knowing what might have happened had not the farmer’s horse got entangled in the drying-lines and brought down the whole weekly wash. The farmer beat his horse brutally; Bouvard protested. ‘It is mine,’ said the peasant.

Pécuchet then embarked on a course of morality; Bouvard attended the first lecture with the children.

‘This science teaches us how to direct our actions. They have two motives: pleasure, interest; and a third still more imperious, duty.

‘Duties are divided into two classes :—(1) Duties to ourselves, which consist in taking care of our bodies, protecting ourselves from all injury. They understood that perfectly. (2) “Duties

towards others, that is to say, to be always loyal, good-humoured, and even fraternal, the human race being one single family. Often a thing pleases us which injures our equals; interest differs from good, for good is in itself irreducible." The children did not understand. He put off the sanction of duties till the next time.

'In all that, according to Bouvard, he had not defined "the good."

' "How would you that we should define it? one feels it."

'Then these lessons in morality would only suit moral people, and Pécuchet's course went no further.'

The effect of rewards and punishments being tried upon the children, they were found to be delighted with praise, but indifferent to blame.

In order to make them kind-hearted, they were given a black cat. Victor boiled it alive. 'It was his own.'

Things went from bad to worse; the friends consulted Bentham.

'In order that a punishment be good, it should be proportioned to the fault, its natural consequence. Has the child broken a window, it should not be mended, let him suffer from cold; if he asks for food when he is not hungry, give it him, indigestion will soon bring repentance; if he is idle, let him remain without work, boredom will soon bring him back to it.

'But Victor would not suffer from cold, his constitution could support excesses, and idleness would suit him.'

Victor even destroyed the cherished coco-nut of Pécuchet, the companion of his life. Pécuchet forgot himself, and delivered a blow which hurled Victor to the earth, who rose in terror, fled to his room, and locked himself in. Fearing that he might commit suicide, Bouvard negotiated with him, and the bribe of a plum-tart induced him to open the door.

'From that time he grew worse. There remained a method highly extolled by Monseigneur Dupanloup: "the severe stare"; they tried to impress a terrific aspect upon their countenances, and produced no effect.

' "We have nothing left but to try religion," said Bouvard.

‘Pécuchet protested. They had banished it from their programme.’

None the less the children were sent to catechism, and Mademoiselle Reine once more shed the light of her gracious countenance upon the establishment.

But Victor beat the son of the lawyer, and Victorine made love to him.

A pedagogical mania now began to rage in the breasts of the friends; they were prepared to teach everything and everybody; they protested against the habit of crucifying owls, who destroy mice; but when they went further into the habits of animals they discovered that ‘sparrows cleanse the cabbage-garden, but swallow cherries. Owls eat insects, and also bats, which are useful; and if moles devour slugs they upset the soil; of one thing they were certain, that all game should be destroyed as being baneful to agriculture.’

This last dogma brought them into collision with Sorel, the gamekeeper, whom they found arresting a poacher. Their efforts on behalf of this ill-used personage brought them before the magistrates, who fined them. They began to make political speeches in the public-house.

‘As they were accused of ignorance of practical life, of a tendency to levelling down, and to immorality, they developed these three conceptions: to replace the family name by a registered number; to arrange the French people in a hierarchy; in order to keep one’s place, it would be necessary from time to time to submit to an examination; no more punishments, no more rewards, but a special record in every village, which would be handed down to posterity.

‘Contempt was poured on their system. They made an article about it for the Bayeux daily paper, drew up a note to the Prefect, a petition to the Chambers, a memorial to the Emperor.

‘The paper did not insert their article.

‘The Prefect did not condescend to reply.

‘The Chambers were dumb, and for a long time they waited for a scrap of paper from the Tuileries.

‘How in the world was the Emperor spending his time? Doubtless with women.

‘Foureau, on behalf of the Sub-Prefect, recommended them a little more reserve.’

They plunged into plans for the improvement of Chavi-gnolles, planned a hospital, slaughter-houses, a church. Pécuchet could not sleep for thinking of Haussmann.

Victor and Victorine meanwhile gradually became intolerable; the former was proved guilty of theft, the latter of even worse; and suddenly there came a letter from the wife of Pécuchet’s old friend, Dumouchel, asking for information about sea-bathing on the coast of Normandy: where was to be found the best society, the least noise? What were the means of transport, the cost of washing, etc. etc.?

But the friends were too far gone on their schemes for ameliorating humanity to pay any attention to such trivial details; having failed in the education of children they projected a course of lectures for adults.

They had some difficulty in securing a room for the purpose, but eventually persuaded the innkeeper to allow them the larger hall of the Golden Cross. They betook themselves to the inn, dressed with unusual care.

(At this point the completed ms. ends, but the outline of the remainder of this chapter is in existence.)

‘. . . and met a large audience. Pécuchet spoke pedantically of the faults of the Government and administration; Bouvard familiarly; the meeting broke up in great confusion.

‘The next morning they discoursed over their breakfast. Pécuchet saw the future of mankind in dark colours. The modern man has grown smaller, and become a machine. He expected the final anarchy of the human race, and reasoned of the impossibility of peace.



‘Owing to the excesses of individualism and the delirium of science barbarism will ensue. He laid down three hypotheses : First, Pantheistic radicalism will break every tie with the past, and an inhuman despotism will ensue ; second, if the theistic absolutism triumphs, the liberalism with which humanity has been imbued since the Revolution succumbs, all is reversed ; third, if the convulsions which have been going on since ’89 continue, oscillating endlessly between two extremes, these oscillations will carry us away by their own forces. There will no longer be ideal, religion, morality.

‘America will have conquered the earth.

‘Future of literature.

‘Universal meanness.

‘There will no longer be anything but a vast guzzling of operatives.

‘End of the world by cessation of caloric.

‘Bouvard, on the other hand, saw the future of humanity in rose-colour.

‘The modern man is in progress.

‘Europe will be regenerated by Asia, the law of history being that civilisation goes from east to west ; the part to be played by China ; the two humanities will eventually be mingled.

‘Inventions of the future ; methods of travelling. Balloons. Submarine boats with glass windows, which will move in a perpetual calm, the motion of the waves being only superficial. Fish will be seen passing by, and landscapes at the bottom of the ocean. All animals will be domesticated, all methods of agriculture exploited.

‘The future of literature ; the opposite of industrial literature. The future of science—magnetic force will be regulated.

‘Paris will become a winter garden ; fruit-trees on the Boulevards. The Seine warmed and filtered ; artificial precious stones will abound ; gilt everywhere ; houses lighted by new methods—indeed, light will be stored ; there are bodies possessing this property, such as sugar, the flesh of certain molluscs, Bologna phosphorus. People will be obliged to daub the front of their houses with luminous paint, and the radiation will light up the streets.

‘Evil will disappear because there will be no need for evil. Philosophy will be a religion.

‘Union of all nations. Public festivities. We shall travel to the heavenly bodies; and, when the earth is worn out, humanity will decamp to the stars.

‘These glorious anticipations were rudely interrupted by the arrival of the police with a warrant from the Sub-Prefect to arrest Bouvard and Pécuchet.

‘In the midst of the hubbub Dumouchel and his wife turned up on their way to sea; gradually the whole village penetrated into the garden and house. Barberou appeared in time to hear Bouvard accused by Gorju of having seduced Mélie; and believed him guilty.

‘Eventually the friends undertook to reform themselves, and a second warrant from the Sub-Prefect was exhibited by Foureau, empowering him to accept their submission. Bouvard pensioned Mélie. The children were removed by the mayor, and showed a revolting insensibility on being taken away, insomuch that Bouvard and Pécuchet wept.

‘So everything had failed in their hands; and they had no further interest in life.

‘A good idea was, however, secretly cherished by both of them; for some time they dissembled; at last they simultaneously disclosed it.

‘“Copy as they used to.”

‘They bought a double desk, books, pens, sandaracum, erasers, and so forth, and set to work.’

Thus did Flaubert propose that the first part of his ‘revenge’ should end. The second part was to contain a carefully classified list of all the contradictions and absurdities that he had encountered in his reading. On the whole, it is perhaps fortunate that he did not live to carry out this idea; which is in itself inartistic. There are not many men who would have the patience to read an encyclopædia of errors.

One difficulty may occur to the reader of the foregoing abstract of *Bouvard et Pécuchet*; after all, the friends are

not complete fools; they are not invariably mistaken. Flaubert was too skilful an artist to make such an oversight as this; one of the chief merits of the work is that the reader has continually to exert his own acuteness in order to see where the satire is bearing; and in this way its interest is maintained. The friends, moreover, by the mere fact that they do take trouble to learn, are always superior to the men of accepted opinions around them. Bouvard not unfrequently says exactly the right thing. And this is perhaps an additional stroke of satire, that the right thing should be not unfrequently said by the man whom the ordinary person writes down fool.

In what sense is this book 'a revenge'? 'Of what,' asks Maxime Ducamp, 'had Flaubert to avenge himself?'

Personally of nothing, but in the name of knowledge and earnestness, of the levity and ignorance which take the chief places in the synagogue.

Decordes was a fool; Louis Bouilhet was something near to a genius; but Decordes was the poet beloved of Rouen.

Everywhere in life we meet with the man who has not attempted to learn, with the man who has been content to smatter, who has swallowed manuals, attended popular lectures, and these with one accord pass judgment, commendatory or the reverse, upon the student whose life has been given to learning. It was the student whom Flaubert wished to avenge upon the multitude, not himself only, but all those who recognise the sacred obligation of fearlessly, earnestly inquiring after the truth.

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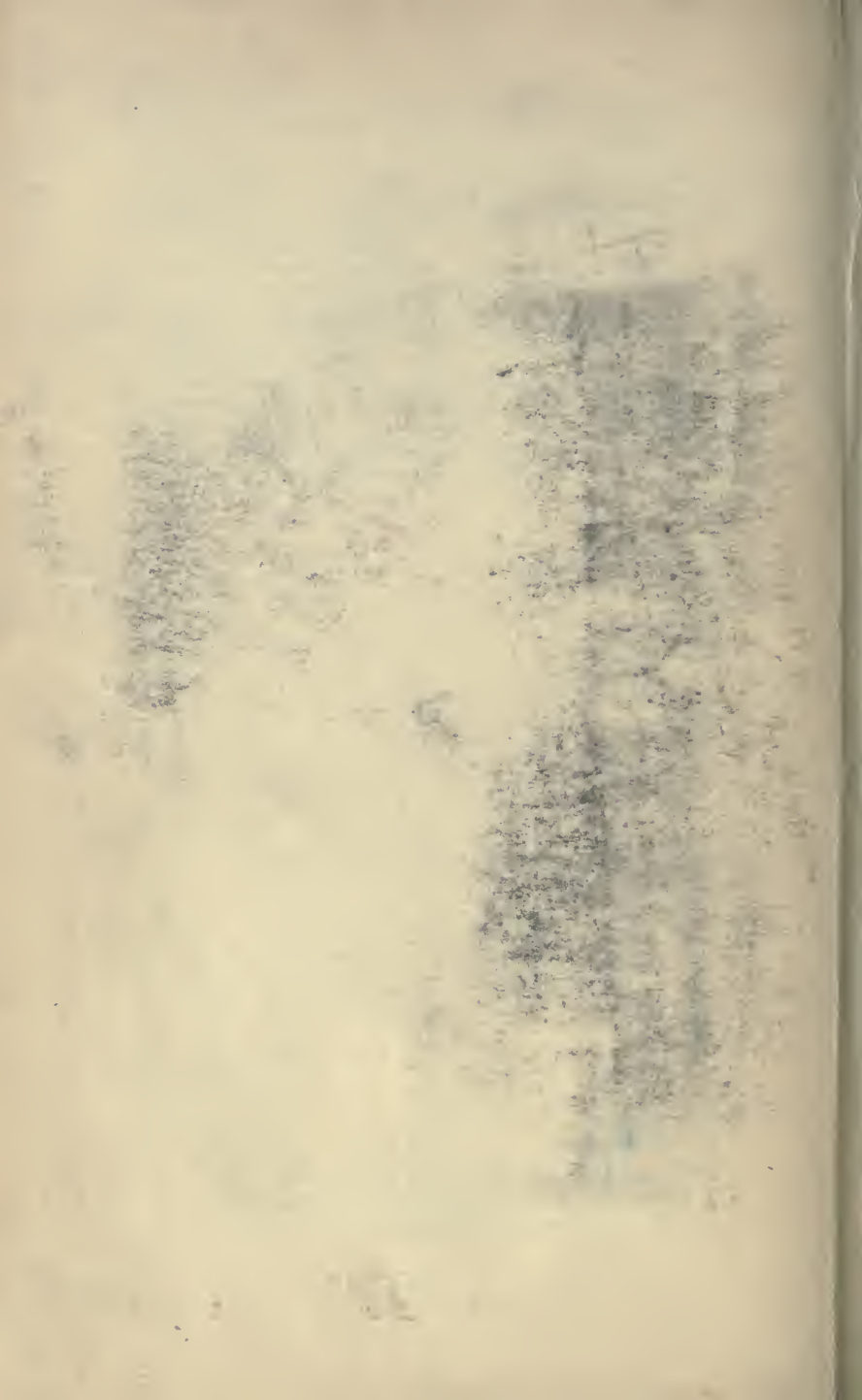
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